STOP THIS WAR
THE EDITORS

THE MAGIC OF *LITTLE WOMEN*
ERIN SCHWARTZ

THE Nation.

HAITI IN A CORNER

After months of peaceful protests and government violence, the country seems oddly calm. But appearances can be deceiving.

AMY WILENTZ

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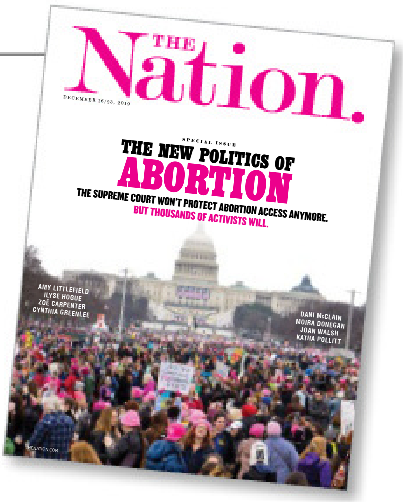

THE Nation.

DECEMBER 16/23, 2019

SPECIAL ISSUE

THE NEW POLITICS OF ABORTION

THE SUPREME COURT WON'T PROTECT ABORTION ACCESS ANYMORE. BUT THOUSANDS OF ACTIVISTS WILL.

AMY LITTLEFIELD
ILYSE HOGUE
ZOË CARPENTER
CYNTHIA GREENLEE

DANI McCLAIN
MOIRA DONEGAN
JOAN WALSH
KATHA POLLITT

THENATION.COM

Old Struggle, New Politics

Thanks for your timely issue on the new politics of abortion [December 16/23]. I thought especially important was Katha Pollitt's piece on the criminalization of pregnant women ["Personhood Is Punishment"]. I would add only that the phony tears that "pro-life" terrorists shed for the unborn are belied by the fact that these are many of the same people who want to deny support to single mothers struggling to raise their kids—from replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program to cutting food stamps, child care funding, and everything else needed to cope with raising a child, especially on low wages. I know it will sound crass, but the demand should be made that if you're going to force someone to have a baby, then you are responsible for financially ensuring the baby has all it needs for full and healthy development. Actually, someone should sue for child support as a test case.

The only other thing I would add is that I am always shocked when the word "sex" is not uttered in modern discussions of abortion rights. The subconscious message of "pro-life" activists is that the enjoyment of sex is a sin, especially for the unmarried. Clearly sexual repression is a large part of the moral view of the right wing, and we can no longer ignore it.

Alan Weinerman
astoria, n.y.

It has taken some time for me to get over the rage I feel about anti-abortion arguments. Opposition to abortion is a religious issue, and I do not want anyone forcing his or her religion on me. The question of abortion must be decided only by the individual woman, not by a law that forces her to accept someone else's religious views.

William Allin Storrer
traverse city, mich.

For Shame

The cover of your December 2/9 issue depicts a fat man with a pig's face and the words "How Much Is Too Much?"

It is time to let go of such stale, Depression-era fat-cat images as stand-ins for greed and wealth when the current reality is that the vast majority of fat people in America are poor.

The consequences of promoting fat phobia are real. Every day fat people die or are misdiagnosed, or a diagnosis is delayed until they lose weight. *The Nation* leads the way in so many areas of progressive thought that it breaks my heart to see you stuck so far behind the times in this area.

Ean Murphy
brooklyn, n.y.

The Truth About *These Truths*

Daniel Immerwahr's analysis of historian Jill Lepore's work—specifically *These Truths* and *This America*—is brilliant [November 11/18]. His conclusion that "the old rules no longer apply," along with all that follows, is dark and grim and, I'm afraid, brutally accurate.

Gus Franza
east setauket, n.y.

The limitation of Lepore's thesis in *These Truths* is clear in her introduction, in which she argues that our "national creed" derives from Thomas Jefferson's ideas of liberty and equality. What nonsense! His Declaration of Independence was no more than a propaganda piece that employed the buzzwords of the Enlightenment to justify the American Revolution and to persuade the French to lend us money for our war. Jefferson, who owned 600 slaves, could not have believed those ideas.

Historians tend to rely too much on words, particularly on the words of leaders, as representations of reality, whereas the sinews of a culture include not only words but also

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(continued on page 26)

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—Hosted by **Jon Wiener**

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since 1865

Stop This War

The United States is now effectively at war with Iran. That the assassination of Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani—not merely an escalation but an act of war—took place on Iraqi soil is no more relevant, or likely to keep the hostilities confined to that country, than the fact that the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand happened in Bosnia.

When future historians debate the cause of this war, it will surely be relevant to note the hollowness of the Trump administration's claim that the Iranian general—whose killing was considered and rejected by both George W. Bush and Barack Obama—posed an imminent threat to American lives or interests. Though far from an apostle of peace, Suleimani had no more blood on his hands than the Saudi tyrant Mohammed bin Salman or Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, both of whom were invited to the Trump White House. Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) was a crucial factor in escalating the hostilities, but so was Bush's post-9/11 decision to include Iran, whose Islamic government had been cooperating with the United States in the aftermath of the attacks, in the "axis of evil."

This made it painfully ironic to see David Frum, the neocon pundit and Bush speechwriter who coined that phrase, warning that war with Iran "terrifies the imagination." Yet Frum is only half right. It's true that by comparison, the Iraq War (a catastrophe that left hundreds of thousands dead, destroyed a country, destabilized the Middle East, and turned Iran into a regional superpower) "looks like a masterpiece of meticulous preparation." But describing our current situation as teetering on the edge of a precipice is far too optimistic. We are already deep in the bloody jaws of disaster. What matters now is getting out—as quickly as possible.

The next move belongs to Iran, where only last month widespread demonstrations were brutally suppressed by the government and whose streets, thanks to Trump, are now filled with millions demanding revenge for the death of Suleimani. The Trump administration's claim that the 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) licenses this assassination is just another lie. But any Iranian response that involves the death of Americans is likely to result in a new AUMF, passed by a Congress that has repeatedly proved supine when it comes to reining in presidential war-making power.

Which makes recent efforts by Representative Ro Khanna and Senator Bernie Sanders to pass a bill withholding funds for any war against Iran without congressional authorization necessary—but far from sufficient. Congress must exercise its constitutional authority to stop further aggressive actions that threaten the stability of the entire region.

However, with Iran now suspending its commitment to the JCPOA and both sides poised to escalate, the current situation is far too dangerous to rely on Congress alone. We need fresh thinking and bold action.

Instead of resisting the Iraqi parliament's demand that US forces withdraw from that country, Americans should welcome it. Trump promised an end to our endless wars; now is the time to make him keep that promise and bring our troops home, including the 3,000 the Pentagon just added. Supporting such a withdrawal should be a minimal expectation for any Democratic candidate for president.

This war is a test, and not just of leadership. Vietnam was a small country with little strategic importance or impact on the global economy, yet the US war there consumed a generation and cost millions of lives. If the war with Iran becomes a regional conflagration, its effects will be felt far beyond the Middle East and beyond the troops who make up our volunteer armed forces. For all of us—but especially the young, who will have to pay the highest price in blood, economic disruption, and environmental disaster—now is the time to take to the streets and stop this war. Because this is a test we dare not fail. ■

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Cover photo: Hector Retamal / AFP via Getty Images

IN MEMORIAM

RIP, Bill Greider

Bill Greider, who joined *The Nation* as national affairs correspondent in 1999, died on Christmas.

It was a joy to work with him. He never wavered in his belief that the greatest promise of American democracy was "plain people in rebellion, organizing themselves to go up against the reigning powers," as he wrote in *The Nation* in 2015.

Bill published books on globalization, capitalism, democracy (including the bible for small-d democrats, 1992's *Who Will Tell the People*), and the role of Congress. Perhaps his most influential book, *Secrets of the Temple: How the Federal Reserve Runs the Country* (1987), challenged the conventional wisdom that the Fed should mercilessly fight inflation. At the time, it was lonely to be a Fed critic—but Bill's insights have been amply vindicated.

He was an American heretic: inquisitive, optimistic, and unwilling to accept conventional dogmas. As historian Rick Perlstein put it, "He was a glorious scourge of elite-consensus fecklessness."

At *The Nation*, Bill wrote scores of articles and editorials on a range of topics and was a generous mentor to young writers and interns. An early critic of the Democratic Party's abandonment of the working class, he consistently spoke inconvenient truths about the roots of our current political dysfunction.

Bill's reporting will endure, and his humane—and troublemaking—voice is especially critical today as we struggle to preserve justice and peace for all.

I will miss him.

—Katrina vanden Heuvel

Burning Apathy

Australia pays a deadly price for climate inaction.

For the last three months, Australia has burned. Across four states, unstoppable fires exacerbated by climate change ravaged millions of hectares. Some fire fronts stretched across 600 miles. Temperatures exceeded 115°F.

Smoke choked Australia's cities, and the Sydney Opera House disappeared behind a brown haze. Children wore face masks as the air quality deteriorated, leading to canceled sporting events and mail delivery in Canberra, Australia's capital. At least 25 people died, and many remain missing, not to mention the more than a billion animals and plants incinerated. Thousands of people stood under blood-red skies on sandy beaches, awaiting rescue by Australia's navy—the largest peacetime evacuation in the country's history.

Christmas neared, the fires worsened, and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who once flourished a lump of coal during a parliamentary session, relaxed at a beach bar in Hawaii. He explained his absence in the weakest terms: "I don't hold a hose, mate," he said. Less than two weeks later, he hosted a New Year's Eve party at his mansion, watching the fireworks cascade into an ash-filled Sydney Harbor.

It was a fitting coda to a decade of climate apathy from Australia's ruling class, a period when the country's leaders went from being global crusaders to villains undermining the whole world's future. With the help of a cadre of climate skeptics, Australia presented itself as far less capable than it actually is, advancing specious arguments about its international insignificance. Australia once aspired to moral and political leadership on the global stage: It helped end South African apartheid, mobilized the effort to protect Antarctica's environment, and helped expand the G-20's mission in the wake of the global financial crisis. But on climate change, it has dropped the ball.

COMMENT

It wasn't always this way. In 2009 the country's Labour government attempted to legislate a mechanism that, while not perfect, would have seen Australia's CO_2 emissions fall year after year. The bill enjoyed brief bipartisan support before Tony Abbott, a climate change denier, took control of the opposition Liberal Party, rejected the bill (along with Australia's Greens, who insisted it didn't go far enough), and began a four-year crusade against climate action. Abbott won the prime minister's office in 2013, in part by promising to repeal Labour's 2011 carbon tax—a proposal that, he falsely asserted, would deliver an annual A$550 windfall to every household in the country. His election marked the beginning of years of rising emissions under the Liberals' conservative rule.

When Abbott's popularity plummeted, he was replaced by Malcolm Turnbull, who, in turn, was ousted by his party for his attempts to implement a mostly reasonable climate policy.

Morrison took the reins in 2018, casting himself as the voice of the "quiet Australians." One of his first decisions as prime minister was to tear up the country's only bipartisan road map for reducing carbon emissions. He's argued against an electric vehicle policy and even ignored warnings about the dangers of the coming fire season.

Morrison's complacency is rooted in an ideology that we might call Australian exemptionalism, the comforting fallacy that Australia is exempt from global responsibility on climate because it isn't big enough to make a difference. It's a belief manufactured by the climate deniers, who ignore Australia's vulnerability even when crises occur. Because the country contributes "only" 1.3 percent of global emissions, they argue, it is statistically off the hook. And any progressive climate activism is derided, then weaponized to stoke economic anxieties.

A change of course now by Australia's conservative leaders remains improbable.

This can only end poorly, for Australia and the world. Australia in particular can't afford unchecked climate change. As droughts intensify, its capacity to produce enough food shrinks. As the Great Barrier Reef dies, its tourist appeal diminishes, and its coastal population is exposed to a dangerous sea-level rise.

What's more, Australia has everything to gain from the opportunities presented by a carbon neutral world. It is richly endowed with resources like rare earth elements, lithium, iron ore, and cobalt—vital components in the manufacture of wind turbines, batteries, and solar panels. Its vast expanses are bathed in sunshine year round. A reasonable Australia would aspire to limitless clean energy, powering industry and creating high-wage jobs.

But these opportunities are merely inconvenient truths for the politicians who spent a decade belittling the need for climate action, many of whom are ultimately in the service of a coal and gas lobby whose members emit more carbon than Australia's entire domestic economy.

Despite the raging fires, a change of course now by Australia's conservative leaders remains improbable. To do so would be to confess that the past decade of climate inaction was a catastrophic miscalculation. So Morrison will keep leading a quiet Australia—a nation unwilling to step up to the challenges at hand, resistant to the opportunities of a decarbonized global economy, and voiceless on the burning issue of our time. EDWARD CAVANOUGH

Edward Cavanough is an Australian journalist and policy researcher.

Asking for a Friend

Liza Featherstone

Regretting Motherhood

Dear Liza,

A few months after I graduated from high school, I got pregnant by my high school sweetheart. We've always had an on-and-off relationship, but I had a fantasy that we'd get married and raise a child together. He wanted to have the child as well; he had always wanted to be a father. And, of course, I thought he loved me.

News flash! A month after I announced my pregnancy, he got a girlfriend. I thought we were dating, but apparently not. I spent the next six to seven months of pregnancy trying to get over him, but we kept living together for the sake of the baby. I realized that I had gotten into this whole mess because I knew he wanted to be a father and that nothing I could do would ever make him happy.

Then our son was born. His father seemed to have the magic touch to calm him down, but I never could. We both suffered from postpartum depression.

After I started working, I felt better. I felt the most useful to our family when I worked and did chores while my former sweetheart took care of our child. Eventually, however, he decided to start working, too, and since he was making more, I was the one who had to give up my job to stay home and take care of our son. For me, watching a baby who's awake for more than two hours is the definition of H-E-double-hockey-sticks. I can't keep up with him.

I hate being a mom, and I often wish I could leave them and start a new life elsewhere. I don't mind working and paying for everything, but I hate taking care of my son. Am I a bad mom for not being able to stand my 6-month-old for more than a few hours? He's teething, and I know that can be a bad stage, but I don't know what to do. I hate living like this.

What do you think I should do? Do you think I need help, or do I need to just suck it up? When does it get better? *—Reluctant Mom*

Dear Reluctant,

All of babyhood can be, for some parents, a tough stage. Some never bond with their babies yet delight in their children as they get older. Mothers are more likely to feel bad about this, as women are expected to love taking care of babies out of a biological desire to nurture. In reality, regardless of gender, some people enjoy doing this kind of labor, and others don't.

I think you should find a therapist, if possible—probably what you meant by "help," although I imagine other forms are also warranted—but I don't think you should leave town. Abandoning the baby could be scarring for all concerned, and besides, the challenges of caring for a baby are specific and temporary, and when he's older, you'll probably regret having given up the chance to be a part of his life.

Do get back to work and get the baby into day care as soon as economically possible, ideally full-time. If day care is too expensive—and your wages are too low—to do this (and knowing that this may well be the case, I'm enraged on your behalf), can you and the father both work part-time? Are there any grandparents or other relatives who can watch the baby for a day or two during the week? Would the father be willing to stay home with the baby if you found a higher-paying job?

My understanding from what you've written is that you and the baby's father live together as parents but aren't a couple. It's understandable that you'd resent this, since you wanted a romantic future with him. While living together makes sense for economic and co-parenting reasons, it appears that it may not be working for you. If living apart is an option, then moving out could give you a break from that (frustrating and unrewarding) relationship, as well as more time away from the baby.

Questions? Ask Liza at TheNation.com/article/asking-for-a-friend

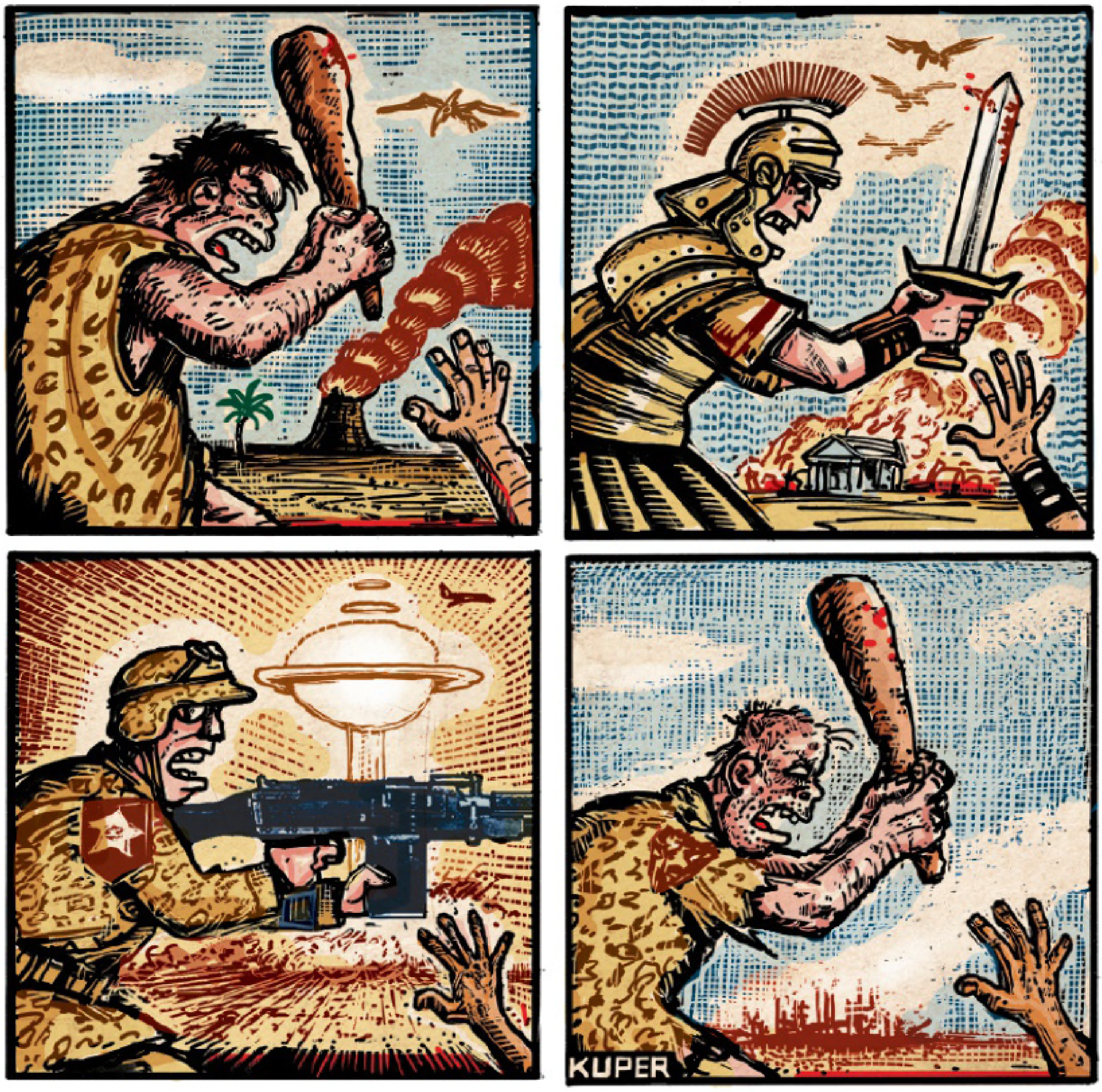
Whatever you do, please leave the baby with his father in the evenings so you can date other people or go out with friends. Having a social life may not solve your problems, but it might make you feel better.

Finally, hang in there, and remember: No matter how hard parenthood gets, no particular stage lasts forever. Your son won't be a baby for long.

ILLUSTRATION BY **JOANNA NEBORSKY**

COMIXNATION

PETER
KUPER



Of course, the bad news is that other stages that you'll enjoy more may also be brief. But that will be a better problem to have.

Dear Liza,

An old friend used to send out a daily e-mail to everyone on her list. It included work news, promotions for her company, things like that. After the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation went into effect, she had to drop all the people from her mailing list who didn't opt in to receive it. Now she sends self-promoting messages on WhatsApp. Her messages—about her new book as well as things that she is thinking about—are not labeled as spam, and at first, when I thought they were DMs for me, I found them strangely impersonal. Once I realized she was sending them to lots of people at the same time, it began to bug me. I didn't sign up for this onslaught, and I feel that WhatsApp is supposed to be for personal messages. What should I do about these transactional texts disguised as messages to friends?

—Spammed

Dear Spammed,

Like so many others emitting toxic waste, your friend has found a loophole around the regulations. I agree with you, Spammed, that her use of WhatsApp is irksome. I like the argument made by the philosopher Todd May in his 2012 book *Friendship in an Age of Economics*: In our current neoliberal era, when so much of life is a transaction, we must fiercely protect friendship as a noneconomic relationship. "In a world often ruled by the dollar and what it can buy," he wrote in an op-ed, "friendship, like love, opens up other vistas." (I think this is *more* true of friendship than romantic love, which is often mired in economics.) That's why your friend's abuse of WhatsApp feels offensive: It brings transaction into a space that you feel should be reserved for relationships outside the marketplace. (Why can't she use LinkedIn or even Facebook or Twitter—platforms on which everyone finds self-promotion acceptable?) Tell your friend that you're happy to hear from her on WhatsApp (if you are) but that for you, it's a medium for personal communication, so you'd prefer not to receive any work-related mass texts on it. ■

Calvin Trillin
Deadline Poet

TRUMP REVEALS HIS REAL REASON FOR HAVING SULEIMANI KILLED

"Trump, former aides said, has burned with a desire to erase Obama's foreign policy legacy and prove himself a superior Commander-in-Chief." —*The Washington Post*

I couldn't abide one simple fact:
Obama had bin Laden whacked.
So first I took out al-Baghdadi,
A really bigger, badder baddie.
By making Suleimani dead,
In killings I would surge ahead.
Obama's White House stay is done,
And I'm the winner, two to one.

신날
처님 오신날
부처님 오신날

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CULTURE & POLITICS OF THE PENINSULA

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THE Nation.TRAVELS

HAITI IN

After months of peaceful protests and government violence,

HECTOR RETAMAL / AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Port-au-Prince

MY FRIENDS IN HAITI TOLD ME NOT TO COME—TOO MUCH CHAOS, TOO MUCH VIOLENCE. IF I insisted on coming, they advised, I had to find a bodyguard, a driver, and an armored car. They said: Bring expired credit cards to give to armed robbers; don't bring cash. Dress down (as if I ever dress any other way) and don't wear jewelry. And of course, don't visit any ATMs or banks. Don't go near the shantytowns, where I previously spent hours talking to people, hanging out. Don't drive late at night. Don't go downtown.

It all seemed a little extreme. But then, a week and a half before I arrived, a French couple who had never been to Haiti before were killed shortly after they flew in to adopt a kid—gunned down in front of their hotel, in an area you pass all the time, no matter where you're going.

For more than a year, the country has been rocked by protests against its corrupt president, Jovenel Moïse, a former banana dealer known in Haiti as Neg Banann, and against the corrupt political system more broadly. Peaceful sit-ins came together outside government buildings in the capital, and large, stirring marches took place throughout the country. The system responded: Well-armed police in battle gear fired on many of the protests, and at least 187 people were killed,

Amy Wilentz is the author, most recently, of Farewell, Fred Voodoo: A Letter From Haiti, *which won the National Book Critics Award for Memoir in 2013.*

La Saline: This shantytown, a hotbed of anti-government protest, was the scene of a massacre that took 71 lives in November 2018.

a CORNER

AMY WILENTZ

the country seems oddly calm. But appearances can be deceiving.

some execution style. Journalists were assassinated.

By the time I was planning my trip, Haiti seemed on the edge of a crisis or breakdown. I'd seen such moments there before. Sometimes they would swing in favor of the people, more often in favor of the ruling elites and the status quo.

Haiti was cornered—exhausted, hungry, exasperated with the old, afraid of the new. To make matters worse, in mid-January, the 10th anniversary of the earthquake that killed more than 100,000 people would arrive, and so would the international media, to show Haitians and the rest of the world how little the country has changed for the better during the past decade, how deeply it has sunk back into the old, bad ways. Yet new threads of hope were gleaming and glittering through this dark material, new ideas coming from young people who feel that without change, they have no future in this country. Older opposition figures—some valuable, some not—are also trying to figure things out, a fractious but united group whose breadth hasn't been seen here recently.

All the protests have posed a central question: Who owns the nation?

Meanwhile, Haitians continue to face what Pierre Esperance, executive director of the Haitian National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH), has called "the ongoing gangsterization of the state." Armed gangs—estimated to number in the dozens—regularly receive funding, automatic weapons, and ammunition, although as Esperance points out, Haiti doesn't make weapons or ammo, and the country has been under an on-and-off arms embargo for many years. These gangs have carried out five massacres during the Moïse administration, the worst of them in a shantytown known as La Saline, a hotbed of anti-government protest that borders one of Port-au-Prince's best-known open-air markets; at least 71 people were brutally murdered there.

All the protests have posed a question central to national sovereignty: Who owns the nation—the people or the government and business class? *"Kot kob PetwoKaribe?"* (Where's the PetroCaribe money?) has been the protesters' cry, a reference to the late Venezuelan president Hugo

Chávez's aid program for Haiti, whose funds have been ruthlessly plundered by government officials and their friends. The plunderers include Moïse, according to a damning 656-page report by the Haitian government's own auditors. The PetroCaribe funds were meant to develop housing, sanitation, roads, health care—things that Haitians need desperately. But most of the money is gone, vanished into political pockets and, through various kinds of nepotistic zombie contracts, into the wallets of good friends of the current administration and its predecessor.

Not going: Haitian President Jovenel Moïse has defied repeated calls to resign—warning that there will be "accidents" if people get in his way.

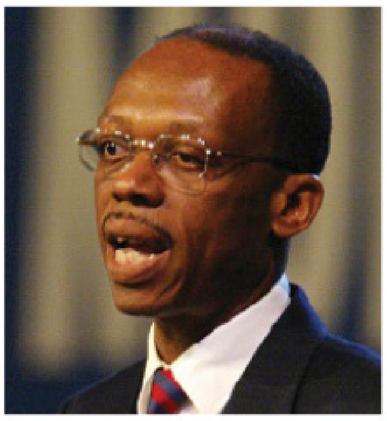
More damningly, in February 2019 supporters of Moïse (and possibly the president himself) sent a band of US mercenaries to protect an official who went to the central bank downtown to transfer $80 million from the PetroCaribe fund to an account controlled exclusively by the president.

"*Kot kob Petwo-Karibe?*" (Where's the PetroCaribe money?) has been the protesters' rallying cry.

For three months this fall, the opposition put the country on repeated lockdowns. No one violated *peyilok*, as it is called. People starved but didn't (or couldn't) go out to buy food; people were sick but couldn't get to the doctor. You couldn't work. By the time I arrived in December, kids hadn't been able to go to school since the term began in September. The dead couldn't be taken to the morgue. During these days and weeks of *peyilok*, the opposition called on various sectors of society to march in protest—labor, clergy, artists and musicians, medical workers, students, and others. But meanwhile, armed gangs of no clear provenance roved the streets, shooting at will.

Still, Moïse says he is committed to serving his full term, which ends in 2022. Late last month he moved from virtual silence into neo-Duvalierist mode, saying there were a number of people whose heads he intends to "cut off." He threatened that there will be "accidents" if people get in his way. Silent regarding the massive opposition against him, Moïse focused his rage on an energy provider that sells electricity to the state-run Electricité d'Haiti, another trough of possible corruption that he has long desired to control.

"What happens when the unstoppable force meets the immovable object?" asked Kim Ives, a veteran Haiti observer, referring to the protests and the president. "In Haiti, the answer seems to be: You form a commission."



Yesterday's man? Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected president in a 1990 landslide that none of his successors have matched—which didn't protect him from a US-sponsored coup.

There are now several commissions militating for Moïse's orderly departure, the resignation of the useless Parliament, and the installation of a replacement government in some form. They range ideologically from fairly far left to pretty far right. What is unprecedented is that they've been trying to work together. Still, for the young, who make up the majority of the country's population and have been crucial to the protests, the results have been less than spectacular.

"We are against corruption and impunity, and we are for social justice," said Pascale Solages, a young leader of the group Nou Pap Dòmi (We Will Not Sleep). NPD is part of the enormous Petrochallenger opposition, which mostly consists of young people who have come out repeatedly to protest the government's impunity over its plunder of the PetroCaribe funds. Solages and I sat at a long table at a restaurant NPD often uses as a headquarters. Surveying the various groups clamoring for Moïse's ouster, Solages added, "I don't have a single view of the opposition. But for the most part, it is run by a political class that the population does not trust. For the last 30 years they've been destroying Haitian institutions, which are now on their knees. We need a new political class and a profound change."

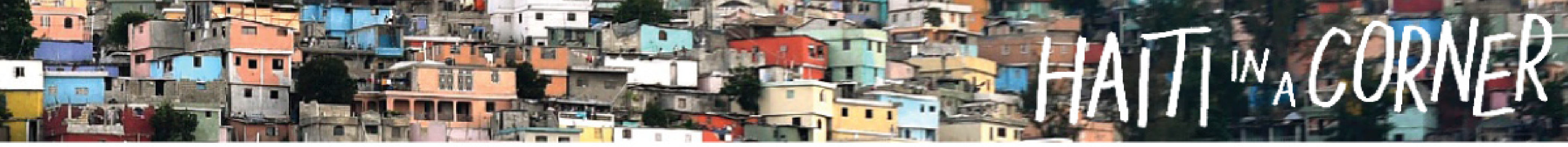
After months of *peyilok*—and amid concerns about further instability in this "shithole" country—the Trump administration, previously indifferent to Haitian affairs, sent down three US officials in turn for brief visits and photo ops with Moïse. The meetings changed the tenor of the national conversation. Each American bureaucrat advised the Haitian president to meet with the opposition, but none suggested that he depart. Then they left. It was clear the US government was not going to whisk Moïse away; he was its obedient friend. At the United States' behest a year earlier, Haiti's ambassador to the Organization of American States (OAS) voted against recognizing the legitimacy of Nicolas Maduro's election in Venezuela. Maduro is the successor of Chávez, who had provided all the PetroCaribe money for Haiti.

AFTER THE VISITS, MOÏSE REACHED OUT TO the opposition, as recommended by his American friends, always with the understanding that he was not going to leave. The opposition initially refused his invitation. That's when I arrived, expecting *peyilok*, armed gangs, paralysis. I took an armored car to my hotel with two big bodyguards in the front seat. In spite of all the dire warnings, everything was calm. Feeling ridiculous—even foolish—and extremely white, I quickly abandoned the security detail. From then on, my stay was in many ways like every other time I've spent in Haiti. Although we drove high up into the hills above town and then far downtown into the poorest and most crowded areas and then over to the shantytown where I'd been told I absolutely could not go, we had no problem.

What accounted for this relative peace? It was the opposition unlocking the country. Haitians were growing restive and resentful under the strictures of *peyilok*. "People are tired of it," Solages said. Also, the opposition did not want to seem unaware of the US position; they needed a space from which to negotiate that didn't appear intransigent.

Interestingly, Haiti has now gone from *peyilok*,

FROM TOP: HECTOR RETAMAL / AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; REBECCA BLACKWELL / AP; ANNA ZIEMINSKI / AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



which exerted real pressure for a change of government, to a political paralysis from which it's hard to see an escape route. Moïse's position remains precarious. On one side, he faces an angry, organized, and militant population trying to push him out. On the other, his friends need him to remain in power so the plunder can continue. Moïse is no doubt worried about both the people and his friends. In French they call his position *coincé*, or cornered.

In the midst of all this, no one but the current president believes in the value of future elections. Elections brought Haitians the corrupt Moïse—even though it took 14 months from the initial ballot to the final result, with all sorts of shenanigans in the process. An earlier, questionable election, the results fudged with the connivance of OAS personnel, brought them the corrupt Michel Martelly, whose sole qualification for the presidency was his fame as a singer and entertainer.

Most Haitians simply don't believe in elections as they are currently run. To quote the former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was elected in a 1990 landslide that no one has yet questioned (or duplicated), elections in Haiti have since turned into "selections." Aristide, by the way, was ousted in a coup green-lit by George H.W. Bush's administration just nine months after that landslide. So much for the legitimately elected.

Today Aristide lives in a large white house in Tabarre, a suburb of the capital that was farmland when he built his home there some 30 years ago but is now part of the growing Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. There are peacocks and peahens roaming his front lawn.

Aristide seems to have retired from political life after the presidential candidate he backed lost the contested election that Moïse eventually won. But in Haiti, *tou sa w we, se pa sa*, as the expression goes: All that you see is not what it seems. And many think Aristide is still working behind the scenes.

He greets me in his very presidential office: huge desk in the center, white walls, white tile floors, bookshelves, the Haitian flag. He is wearing a formal white guayabera and pressed pants and doesn't seem substantially changed from the person I first met back in 1986, when Jean-Claude Duvalier (aka Baby Doc, the son of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier, the country's notorious longtime strongman) had just fallen. Back then, Aristide was a firebrand priest from the poorest parish in town. His break with the church, his two presidencies (or three, depending on how you count them), the two coups d'état against him, his two forced exiles, marriage, fatherhood, projects of all kinds—nothing seems to have changed him. He remains the kind of person who would love a *peyilok* movement. No doubt he'd like to lead it.

For three months this fall, the opposition put the country in continuous lockdown. No one violated *peyilok*.

Aristide's radicalism in the mid-1980s, which grew out of liberation theology, seemed unacceptable to the moderates then running the world. It might be more acceptable now, especially since it has been embraced by the new generation, both in Haiti and elsewhere. In 2003, long before Ta-Nehisi Coates's famous piece in *The Atlantic*, Aristide presented France with a $21 billion bill for the 90 million gold francs in reparations that Haiti (the victor, remember) was forced to cough up to France (the loser) after the Haitian Revolution in 1804. (France cavalierly rejected Aristide's payback demand and promptly collaborated with the United States to remove him from the presidency—for the second time.) Still, in spite of Aristide's historic feats, it seems unlikely that a person with his vexed history, in Haiti and the hemisphere, can carry the banner for a new way forward.

But Aristide is not the only name from the past that gets mentioned in discussions of Haiti's future. As a toddler, Nicolas Duvalier fled the country with his family when his father, Baby Doc, was overthrown by a popular

BOTTOM: REBECCA BLACKWELL / AP

A country in lockdown: During the months of *peyilok*, different sectors of society marched. Here, artists from Port-au-Prince take to the streets.

uprising in 1986. Though Nicolas Duvalier grew up mostly in France, he's been toying recently with a future in Haitian politics. "We are not there yet," he said when asked if he'll run for president. But there's a saying in Haitian Creole (there's one for every occasion): *Ptit tig, se tig*. The son of a tiger is a tiger.

Papa Doc at war: President for Life François Duvalier fighting off a military coup in 1958. He led his despotic regime for 13 more years, until his death.

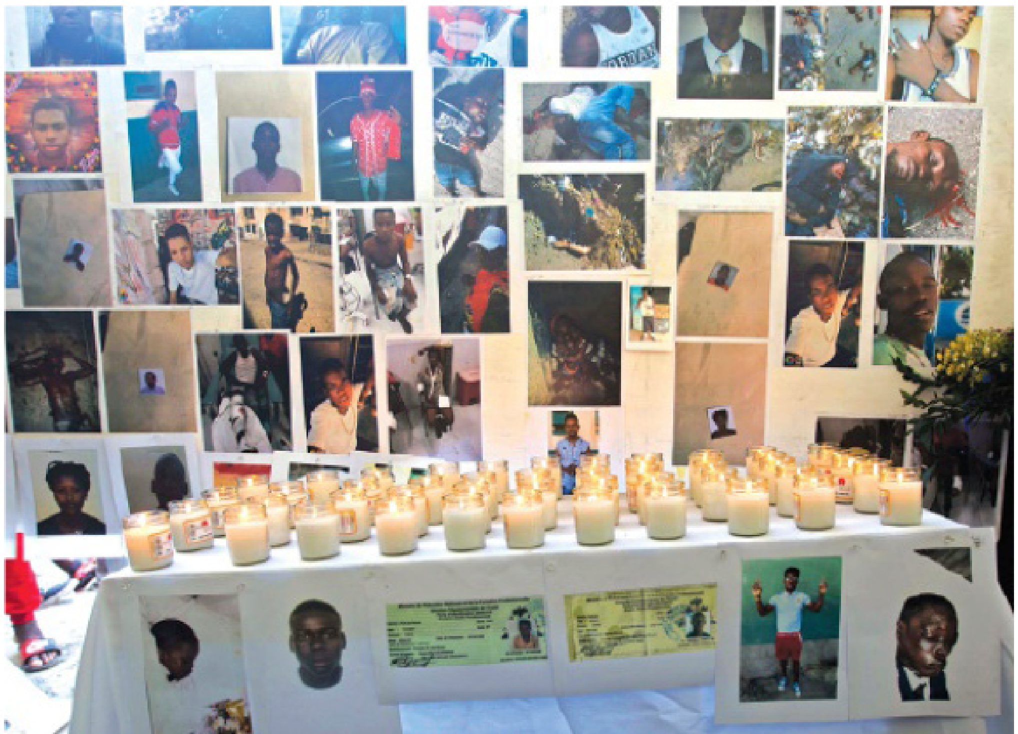
HAITIANS ARE THINKING ABOUT THE EARTHQUAKE as its anniversary approaches. They're always thinking about the earthquake, actually, because everyone lost someone in it and because the rebuilding effort has been such a massive disappointment. Most of the money promised to Haiti for reconstruction has been squandered or stolen or lost—or was never delivered in the first place. Bill Clinton's Build Back Better campaign for post-earthquake Haiti has been a total failure, despite the campaign's declaration amid the rubble that the country was "ready for business."

"Haiti is a little machine that produces gigantic amounts of corruption."
—Frantz Duval, editor, *Le Nouvelliste*

Clinton was appointed the United Nations special envoy for Haiti eight months before the quake struck. (He and Hillary Clinton spent part of their honeymoon there in 1975.) Much of the funding that came in after the earthquake went to US contractors for projects, fees, housing, food, and security. Less than a penny on every dollar ended up with Haitian groups.

A few banks downtown have been rebuilt, but there is still earthquake rubble in the area behind them, topped with burning garbage, through which the poorest of the poor are scavenging. Even on Grande Rue downtown, once the city's business center, you can see 19th century buildings ready to collapse. People live and work precariously amid the rubble or are constructing concrete buildings that don't abide by any seismic code. A few shantytowns were created during reconstruction, but they are now overrun with gangs and drugs.

There are some new hotels, most functioning at a reduced level because of *peyilok* and because the post-quake international relief caravan has moved on to more fruitful fields. Interestingly, the most lucrative clients the hotels have attracted recently have been the opposition factions that met to produce what are known as the Marriott Accord, which seeks the replacement of the entire Moïse government, and the Kinam Agreement (at the Hotel Kinam), which calls for the replacement of the entire government—except for Moïse.



Not forgotten: An altar commemorating the victims of La Saline massacre.

TOP: AP; BOTTOM: DIEU NALIO CHERY / AP

"Haiti is a little machine that produces gigantic amounts of corruption," said Frantz Duval, the editor of *Le Nouvelliste*, the French-language daily in Port-au-Prince. "The earthquake was like PetroCaribe. All that money suddenly turning up was an opportunity for thievery. And there's kind of an entente cordiale among the thieves splitting up the booty. There was a period of enjoyment after the earthquake when everyone was in the game—just like PetroCaribe."

This is why Petrochallengers like Solages don't just want to displace Moïse; they want to get rid of the whole damn system. Most people here don't go into government for the love of statecraft or out of a desire to serve the public. They do it to enrich themselves as much and as quickly as possible before they're ousted by the next batch of thieves. Periodic elections do little to intrude on this musical-chairs mechanism; they simply offer an illusory authenticity to each successive wake of vultures.

By the middle of December 2019, the opposition began to send out feelers to Moïse. The message that the United States wanted him to stay had been received. This doesn't always play out, though. At the end of January 1986, President for Life Jean-Claude Duvalier stood before the Haitian people and told them, "I am here, stronger than a monkey's tail." A week later, he was on a US C-141 transport plane bound for Paris.

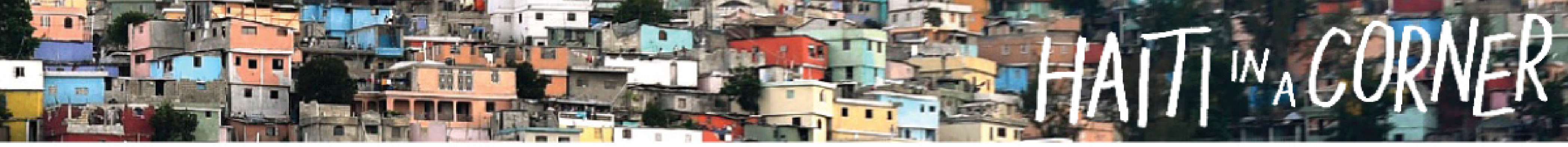
It turned out the Reagan administration had other ideas about who could run Haiti. The State Department put together a claque of Haitian political figures and army officers known officially as the National Council of Government but called by Haitians what it was: the junta. The Trump administration, au contraire, apparently can't imagine an alternative to its pliant Haitian banana dealer.

I DRIVE TO AN END-OF-THE-YEAR PICNIC IN THE mountains above Port-au-Prince in a convoy with a group of businesspeople, diplomats, and their families. On the way up, the city falls away, and then you're in the Haitian countryside. The hills are steep, and terraced emerald farms climb the sides of the canyon. Strong, thin farmers—*kiltivatè*, as they're called—walk by the side of the road carrying their machetes. Women walk there too, carrying produce to market in baskets or black garbage bags, a more modern accessory, on their heads. Roadside shacks and little stalls sell fruit and water in the smallest to-go plastic bags.

At the picnic, a beautiful little blond girl is swinging from a hammock and talking about her grandparents' house in Palm Beach—"not on the beach, though." But where do you live? "In Haiti, of course, but we're moving." Where to? "I don't know. Bahamas, Croatia…."

"We are all moving out of the country," says one glamorous matron from an old and wealthy family. "We're all selling our houses. Except, of course, no one is buying. Because the people who could buy are all selling, obviously. The situation in the country is unacceptable. We can't sit through another one of these episodes. We have to go. And the thing is, what these people don't understand is, we are the state."

The implication is clear:



When they go, Haiti fails. Though from what I've been told, the elite moved most of their money out of the country a long time ago.

Richard Widmaier runs Radio Metropole, which in one form or another has been in his family for four generations. He's not a big enthusiast of Moïse ("He has a passion for two things: agriculture and himself") but still thinks he should remain in office. "OK, he really should have just been minister of agriculture, which maybe he could have handled," Widmaier says. "But a president who's elected for five years should serve for five years." It's a point of view held mostly by people with connections to the present government—or who understandably fear the chaos that might ensue if Moïse steps down.

Later that day, I'm with a businessman up in Pétion-Ville, which used to be a safe haven from the craziness of downtown until the earthquake came and downtown moved uptown. We' re having a lovely dinner on a covered terrace, palm fronds shaking in the breeze, pretty little sconces and chandeliers over the tables. My friend is eating the biggest crab I have ever seen. We're chatting in a preliminary way when he gets a call.

"Another kidnapping," he says as he takes the phone out of the restaurant. "I can fix this," I hear him say to the person on the other end. Four minutes later, he comes back to the table, and we finish our meal almost as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. Two days later, the victim is released. A ransom was paid. Kidnapping is a business in Haiti now.

"The situation in the country is unacceptable. We have to go. And what these people don't understand is, we are the state."

—a member of a wealthy Haitian family

I have an old friend in Haiti who has worked in difficult political situations there for pretty much her whole life. She has moved up and down through nongovernmental organizations, and she's Haitian, so she understands the lay of the land—and doesn't want me to use her name. After Duvalier fell, she says, Haitian civil society burst into activity. There were all sorts of meetings—*tet ansanm* (heads together) is the term in Creole—of intellectuals, artists, professionals thinking about ways to jump-start the country. "And the thing is, they were all doing it on their own," she says, "without start-up funds or not-for-profit status or money from foreign groups." Farmers were still managing to grow and survive on their small plots of land. Back then, Haiti still had food self-sufficiency.

Now, she points out, Haiti is the second-largest importer of US rice, after Mexico. I hear this fact mentioned everywhere I go, because it is astonishing to Haitians. The country's fertile Artibonite Valley once provided more than enough rice to feed Haiti. The story of how rice production failed is long, but it includes subsidized US rice being dumped on the Haitian market during the Clinton administration, with much of the grain coming from Arkansas farms. As cheap US rice undersold locally produced rice, farms in Haiti collapsed, and people from the countryside moved to the capital, where they eventually lived in shacks and shanties and ended up eating US rice. When Duvalier left, my friend continues, the Haitian poor were still fit and healthy. Now they eat "really scary" imported stuff,

UNITED STATES OF DISTRACTION
MEDIA MANIPULATION IN POST-TRUTH AMERICA
(AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT)
NOLAN HIGDON + MICKEY HUFF
FOREWORD BY RALPH NADER
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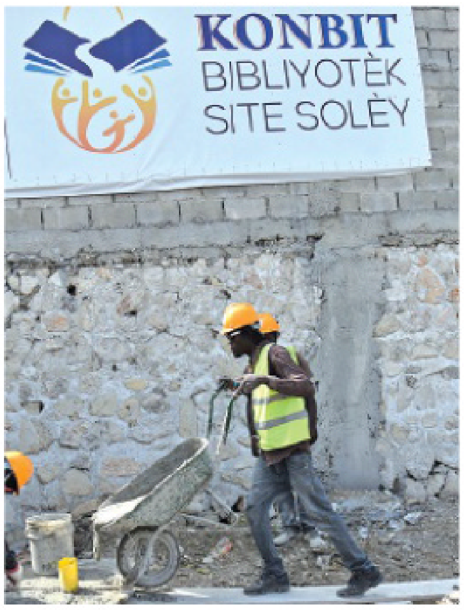
and illnesses that used to be rare—like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer—are increasingly common.

She paints a picture of the pastoral Haiti that I remember. There were ideas and activism and a lot of energy. Living was cheap. Professionals could reside in leafy neighborhoods, and even though they earned only $600 or $800 a month, rent was just $50. But in 1991, when the first UN observers arrived (after the initial coup against Aristide), some were earning $6,000 a month, and rents rose.

“Every natural disaster here brought with it new outsiders,” my friend says. “The value of things is no longer measured by the national but by the international market. Haitians are priced out of everything, including food. To put together a group, you have to rely on outsiders to fund you, and your innate Haitianness gets lost or muddled.”

“HAITIANS AREN’T THE SAME AS THEY WERE IN 1986,” SAYS Marcus Garcia, a longtime editor and radio host. “There’s not much hope. And the politicians are not the same. There are no éminences grises. All the communists are dead. The intellectuals are dead. The objective press is finished. The diaspora is desperate and disappointed. There’s just a big void everywhere.”



Book by book: In Cité Soleil, where armed gangs roam the streets, a library is being built by the community.

What is new and good in the country, he adds, are the young. For a while, after the earthquake, they fled; there were two planes a day to Chile and Brazil. “With the changes in those countries’ governments, that’s no longer an option,” Garcia says, “and so the kids have nowhere to go. They have to fight for their lives here, and that’s what we’re seeing.”

My old Haitian friend from the NGO world agrees that there is healthy protest right now, and she’s cheered by this. But she also has ideas for Haiti’s long-term future. Like many, she believes that it would be healthier for Haiti to avoid the global economy than to participate in it. There is a nostalgia for decent poverty these days, for what Aristide called sitting at the table, not under it.

This same idea was proposed by the Haitian geographer Georges Anglade in his 1983 book *Elegy for Poverty*. Anglade—who died in the earthquake—argued for the brilliance and know-how of the Haitian peasantry against a global economy that, at best, provides assembly jobs for the poor and the loss of all tradition. Nearly 40 years after the book’s publication, his Haiti has been almost eradicated.

In Haiti there was once something called the *konbit*, a cooperative handed down from the early days of the colony, when the enslaved population was responsible for any improvement in their lives. Roof raising was a particular activity of the *konbit*, and the tradition continued long after the revolution. During a *konbit*, the community would assemble. Food was cooked, songs were sung, stories were told, and children frolicked; meanwhile, a roof was raised for a neighbor. Or a path to a field was built. Or a community garden was planted. The *konbit* would be repaid with later good deeds for other members of the group.

What my friend is mourning and what Anglade worried about decades earlier is the loss of such communal effort and competence as cash—in the form of international aid—enters the economy. After the earthquake, for example, people didn’t form groups to protect women in the camps from rape. Instead, victims went from one foreign relief organization to another, seeking funds and rape kits. This didn’t protect them from more attacks, but it did bring in cash, and the aid organizations could add another rape to their fundraising lists. The *konbit* builds solidarity on the ground that can be sustained, unlike a cash influx.

“Another kidnapping,” said my friend. Two days later, the victim was released, ransom paid. Kidnapping is a business in Haiti now.

In the old days, a big *konbit* could have gotten rid of the earthquake rubble near the port downtown within a month and without pay, because it had to be done. Today, with no one paying and the big yellow trucks from the international relief organizations gone, the rubble remains. When your country is no longer your own, you wait for others to fix it for you or pay you to fix it. Pride of ownership has faded in Haiti, which used to be one of the country’s signal characteristics, since it was precisely ownership of themselves—their bodies and their land—for which Haitians fought a revolution.

There is a realism in Haiti-pessimism, but Haitians’ struggle for the soul of their country is not yet entirely lost. In Cité Soleil, one of the most battered shantytowns, where armed gangs roam and people live near a much-photographed river of sewage, there is a library being constructed opposite the police station where shantytown residents can go to borrow books; study for tests; learn to use computers; record in the recording studio; work in the language lab on their Creole, French, Spanish, English, or Arabic; rent a room as an office or workspace; or just hang out at the cafeteria or play in the playground, and it’s being built mostly with small contributions from the community and from visitors. (Everything described above is still *en train* but visibly underway.) It’s a form of *konbit*.

Downtown there is the Ghetto Biennale on Grand Rue, where foreign artists come and meet Haitian artists and work for a week. (Despite the current unrest, more than 30 foreign artists turned up for this great tradition, which begins in mid-December.) There’s the annual jazz festival, during which musicians play all over town. There’s Grande Plaine, the tiny peasant community outside the town of Gros Morne that has reforested its area with the help of family members living abroad. There’s the park in Martissant that neighbors—including gang members—cultivate and use for recreation and craft markets. Little shoots of possibility everywhere.

LATER, I’M DRIVING UP A HILL TO GET AWAY FROM downtown and look at art, but really I’m already in a Haitian tableau. Sky blue. Puff of bright white cloud. Strange wisps of smoke along the roadside: garbage burning, corn grilling. Small businesses dot the landscape, everything terraced, shacks topped with corrugated tin and stairways leading to nowhere (a Haitian architectural specialty). Rebar sprouts in bunches from concrete like some strange heliotropic plant, awaiting further building instructions that may or may not come. Small cardboard churches with colored cellophane windows hang from trees. These are the annual *fanales*, for sale as Christmas decorations,

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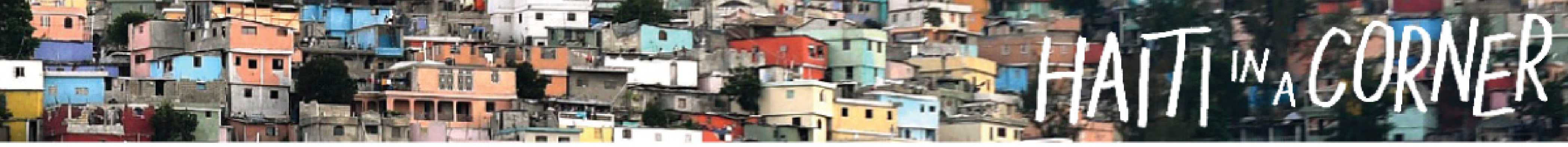


because everyone is hoping things will stay quiet and Haiti will have its beloved Christmas this hard year. Beyond the road hides the countryside as we limp up the hill.

Finally we arrive.

And now I'm having lunch with a member of the country's 1 percent, in a rambling stone house that once belonged to a Haitian president. We (a Swiss artist-intern, a young Haitian assistant, and me) sit down at the table. We're waiting for the master of the house; the rest of his family has left Haiti because of *peyilok*. He walks in with a certain measured gait and looks at life with an infinite, patient condescension. A dark-skinned Haitian girl brings in lunch. Now we're in France: two *poussins* surrounded by perfectly cooked boiled potatoes with parsley. A bottle of French malbec is the table's centerpiece. More bottles sit on the sideboard.

The master of the house is definitely a Haiti-pessimist. Of course, he loves Haiti as well, but he would never say so. At the end of the meal, he gathers all our bones on one plate and calls in his eight big dogs—six recently purchased for security. Each dog gets some bones; favorites get a little more. They don't fight because they know that if they do, they'll get kicked out. One cocks her head, waiting.

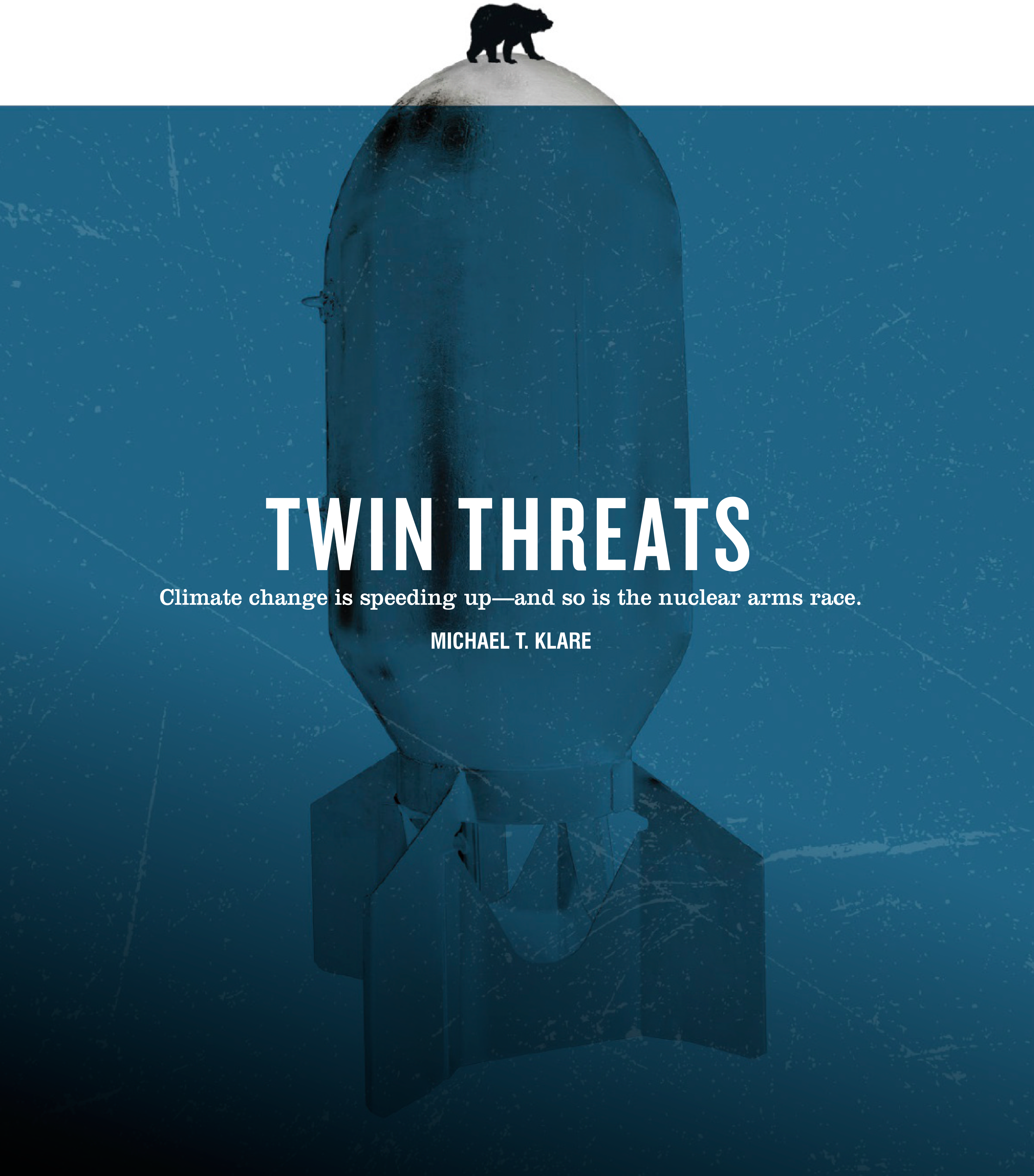
There is a realism in Haiti-pessimism. But Haitians' struggle for the soul of their country is not yet lost.

When I get back to Los Angeles, I tear the brown wrapper off the painting I bought that day. Here it is on my desk, a tiny thing with all of Haiti in it: blue sky and sea, mountains behind mountains, canyons and ridges in the foreground, palms blowing, dirt roads going down the hillsides, a strip of pale diamond beach, and everything flecked with a shimmering green, gold, and purple. All that's missing are the people. Even though, of course, they are the ones who hold the future of this country in their hands. They have two terrible disadvantages: a low caloric intake and no money. Yet their protests have brought Jovenel Moïse to the brink and forced a nervous US to send envoys to protect him. It's cruel to wish the hardships of *peyilok* on anyone, and it's not a strategy that can work indefinitely. But expect the protests, in some new form, to start up again after Christmas—or after Carnival in late February.

Haitians are not going to give up on this *konbit*. Or their country. ■

MARANATHA
TIRES
PRIX

The Ghetto Biennale: This December, more than 30 foreign artists arrived for a week of work and conversation with their Haitian counterparts.



TWIN THREATS

Climate change is speeding up—and so is the nuclear arms race.

MICHAEL T. KLARE

President Donald Trump may not accept the scientific reality of climate change, but the nation's senior military leaders recognize that climate disruption is already underway, and they are planning extraordinary measures to prevent it from spiraling into nuclear war. One particularly worrisome scenario is if extreme drought and abnormal monsoon rains devastate agriculture and unleash social chaos in Pakistan, potentially creating an opening for radical Islamists aligned with elements of the armed forces to seize some of the country's 150 or so nuclear weapons. To avert such a potentially cataclysmic development, the US Joint Special Operations Command has conducted exercises for infiltrating Pakistan and locating the country's nuclear munitions. Most of the necessary equipment for such raids is already in position at US bases in the region, according to a 2011 report from the nonprofit Nuclear Threat Initiative. “It's safe to assume that planning for the worst-case scenario regarding Pakistan's nukes has already taken place inside the US government,” said Roger Cressey, a former deputy director for counterterrorism in Bill Clinton's and George W. Bush's administrations in 2011.

Such an attack by the United States would be an act of war and would entail enormous risks of escalation, especially since the Pakistani military—the country's most powerful institution—views the nation's nuclear arsenal as its most prized possession and would fiercely resist any US attempt to disable it. “These are assets which are the pride of Pakistan, assets which are…guarded by a corps of 18,000 soldiers,” former Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf told NBC News in 2011. The Pakistani military “is not an army which doesn't know how to fight. This is an army that has fought three wars. Please understand that.”

Rising global temperatures and sea levels will diminish food and water supplies in resource-deprived areas, increasing the risk of starvation and social unrest.

A potential US military incursion in nuclear-armed Pakistan is just one example of a crucial but little-discussed aspect of international politics in the early 21st century: how the acceleration of climate change and nuclear war planning may make those threats to human survival harder to defuse. At present, the intersections between climate change and nuclear war might not seem obvious. But powerful forces are pushing both threats toward their most destructive outcomes.

In the case of climate change, the unbridled emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases is raising global temperatures to unmistakably dangerous levels. Despite growing worldwide reliance on wind and solar power for energy generation, the global demand for oil and natural gas continues to rise, and carbon emissions are projected to remain on an upward trajectory for the foreseeable future. It is highly unlikely, then, that the increase in average global temperature can be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the aspirational goal adopted by the world's governments under the Paris Agreement in 2015, or even to 2°C, the actual goal. After that threshold is crossed, scientists agree, it will prove almost impossible to avert catastrophic outcomes, such as the collapse of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets and a resulting sea level rise of 6 feet or more.

Climbing world temperatures and rising sea levels will diminish the supply of food and water in many resource-deprived areas, increasing the risk of widespread starvation, social unrest, and human flight. Global corn production, for example, is projected to fall by as much as 14 percent in a 2°C warmer world, according to research cited in a 2018 special report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Food scarcity and crop failures risk pushing hundreds of millions of people into overcrowded cities, where the likelihood of pandemics, ethnic strife, and severe storm damage is bound to increase. All of this will impose an immense burden on human institutions. Some states may collapse or break up into a collection of warring chiefdoms—all fighting over sources of water and other vital resources.

A similar momentum is now evident in the emerging nuclear arms race, with all three major powers—China, Russia, and the United States—rushing to deploy a host of new munitions. This dangerous process commenced a decade ago, when Russian and Chinese leaders sought improvements to their nuclear arsenals and President Barack Obama, in order to secure Senate approval of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 2010, agreed to initial funding for the modernization of all three legs of America's strategic triad, which encompasses submarines, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and bombers. (New START, which mandated significant reductions in US and Russian arsenals, will expire in February 2021 unless renewed by the two countries.) Although Obama initiated the modernization of the nuclear triad, the Trump administration has sought funds to proceed with their full-scale production, at an estimated initial installment of $500 billion over 10 years.

Even during the initial modernization program of the Obama era, Russian and Chinese leaders were sufficiently alarmed to hasten their own nuclear acquisitions. Both countries were already in the process of modernizing their stockpiles—Russia to replace Cold War–era systems that had become unreliable, China to provide its relatively small arsenal with enhanced capabilities. Trump's decision to acquire a whole new suite of ICBMs, nuclear-armed submarines, and bombers has added momentum to these efforts. And with all three major powers upgrading their arsenals, the other nuclear-weapon states—led by India, Pakistan, and North Korea—have been expanding their stockpiles as well. Moreover, with Trump's recent decision to abandon the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, all major powers are developing missile delivery systems for a regional nuclear war such as might erupt in Europe, South Asia, or the western Pacific.

All things being equal, rising temperatures will increase the likelihood of nuclear war, largely because climate change will heighten the risk of social stress, the decay of nation-states, and armed violence in general, as I argue in my new book, *All Hell Breaking Loose*. As food and water supplies dwindle and governments come under ever-increasing pressure to meet the vital needs of their populations, disputes over critical resources are likely to become more heated and violent, whether the parties involved have nuclear arms or not. But this danger is compounded by the possibility that several nuclear-armed powers—notably India, Pakistan, and China—will break apart as a result of climate change and accompanying battles over disputed supplies of water.

Together, these three countries are projected by the UN Population Division to number approximately 3.4 billion people in 2050, or 34 percent of the world's population. Yet they possess a much smaller share of the world's freshwater supplies, and climate change is destined to reduce what they have even further. Warmer temperatures are also expected to diminish crop yields in these countries, adding to the desperation of farmers and very likely resulting in widespread ethnic strife and population displacement. Under these circumstances, climate-related internal turmoil would increase the risk of nuclear war in two ways: by enabling the capture of nuclear arms by rogue elements of the military and their possible use against perceived enemies and by inciting wars between these states over vital supplies of water and other critical resources.

The risk to Pakistan from climate change is thought to be particularly acute. A large part of the population is still engaged in agriculture, and much of the best land—along with access to water—is controlled by wealthy landowners (who also dominate national politics). Water scarcity and mismanagement is a perennial challenge, and climate change is bound to make the problem worse. *Climate and Social Stress: Implications for Security Analysis*, a 2013 report by the National Research Council for the US intelligence community, highlights the danger of chaos and conflict in that country as global warming advances. Pakistan, the report notes, is expected to suffer from inadequate water supplies during the dry season and severe flooding during the monsoon—outcomes that will devastate its agriculture and amplify the poverty and unrest already afflicting much of the country. "The Pakistan case," the report reads, "illustrates how a highly stressed environmental system on which a tense society depends can be a source of political instability and how that source can intensify when climate events put increased stress on the system." Thus, as global temperatures rise and agriculture declines, Pakistan could shatter along ethnic, class, and religious lines, precisely the scenario that might trigger the sort of intervention anticipated by the US Joint Special Operations Command.

Water scarcity and mismanagement are perennial challenges that are bound to worsen as climate change progresses.

Assuming that Pakistan remains intact, another great danger arising from increasing world temperatures is a conflict between it and India or between China and India over access to shared river systems. Whatever their differences, Pakistan and western India are forced by geography to share a single river system, the Indus, for much of their water requirements. Likewise, western China and eastern India also share a river, the Brahmaputra, for their vital water needs. The Indus and the Brahmaputra obtain much of their flow from periods of heavy precipitation; they also depend on meltwater from Himalayan glaciers, and these are at risk of melting because of rising temperatures. According to the IPCC, the Himalayan glaciers could lose as much as 29 percent of their total mass by 2035 and 78 percent by 2100. This would produce periodic flooding as the ice melts but would eventually result in long periods of negligible flow, with calamitous consequences for downstream agriculture. The widespread starvation and chaos that could result would prove daunting to all the governments involved and make any water-related disputes between them a potential flash point for escalation.

Runaway warming: Expanses of ice are melting at unprecedented rates, with potentially grim geopolitical repercussions.

DAVID SILVERMAN / GETTY IMAGES

AS IN PAKISTAN, WATER SUPPLY HAS ALWAYS PLAYED A pivotal role in the social and economic life of China and India, with both countries highly dependent on a few major river systems for civic and agricultural purposes. Excessive rainfall can lead to catastrophic flooding, and prolonged drought has often led to widespread famine and mass starvation. In such a setting, water management has always been a prime responsibility of government—and a failure to fulfill this function effectively has often resulted in civil unrest. Climate change is bound to increase this danger by causing prolonged water shortages interspersed with severe flooding. This has prompted leaders of both countries to build ever more dams on all key rivers.

India, as the upstream power on several tributaries of the Indus, and China, as the upstream power on the Brahmaputra, have considered damming these rivers and diverting their waters for exclusive national use, thereby diminishing the flow to downstream users. Three of the Indus's principal tributaries, the Jhelum, Chenab, and Ravi rivers, flow through Indian-controlled Kashmir (now in total lockdown, with government forces suppressing all public functions). It's possible that India seeks full control of Kashmir in order to dam the tributaries there and divert their waters from Pakistan—a move that could easily trigger a war if it occurs at a time of severe food and water stress and one that would very likely invite the use of nuclear weapons, given Pakistan's attitude toward them.

The situation regarding the Brahmaputra could prove equally precarious. China has already installed one dam on the river, the Zangmu Dam in Tibet, and has announced plans for several more. Some Chinese hydrologists have proposed the construction of canals linking the Brahmaputra to more northerly rivers in China, allowing the diversion of its waters to drought-stricken areas of the heavily populated northeast. These plans have yet to come to fruition, but as global warming increases water scarcity across northern China, Beijing might proceed with the idea. "If China was determined to move forward with such a scheme," the US National Intelligence Council warned in 2009, "it could become a major element in pushing China and India towards an adversarial rather than simply a competitive relationship."

Severe water scarcity in northern China could prompt yet another move with nuclear implications: an attempted annexation by China of largely uninhabited but water-rich areas of Russian Siberia. Thousands of Chinese farmers and merchants have already taken up residence in eastern Siberia, and some commentators have spoken of a time when climate change prompts a formal Chinese takeover of those areas—which would almost certainly prompt fierce Russian resistance and the possible use of nuclear weapons.

In the Arctic, global warming is producing a wholly

PRESIDENT OBAMA, 70 YEARS IS TOO LONG. #ELIMINATENUKES
GLOBAL ZERO

Call to disarm: Despite long-standing public pleas to abolish nuclear weapons, the Pentagon continues to prioritize defense over decarbonization.

KYODO VIA AP IMAGES

different sort of peril: geopolitical competition and conflict made possible by the melting of the polar ice cap. Before long, the Arctic ice cap is expected to disappear in summertime and to shrink noticeably in the winter, making the region more attractive for resource extraction. According to the US Geological Survey, an estimated 30 percent of the world's remaining undiscovered natural gas is above the Arctic Circle; vast reserves of iron ore, uranium, and rare earth minerals are also thought to be buried there. These resources, along with the appeal of faster commercial shipping routes linking Europe and Asia, have induced all the major powers, including China, to establish or expand operations in the region. Russia has rehabilitated numerous Arctic bases abandoned after the Cold War and built others; the United States has done likewise, modernizing its radar installation at Thule in Greenland, reoccupying an airfield at Keflavík in Iceland, and establishing bases in northern Norway.

Increased economic and military competition in the Arctic has significant nuclear implications, as numerous weapons are deployed there and geography lends it a key role in many nuclear scenarios. Most of Russia's missile-carrying submarines are based near Murmansk, on the Barents Sea (an offshoot of the Arctic Ocean), and many of its nuclear-armed bombers are also at bases in the region to take advantage of the short polar route to North America. As a counterweight, the Pentagon has deployed additional subs and antisubmarine aircraft near the Barents Sea and interceptor aircraft in Alaska, followed by further measures by Moscow. "I do not want to stoke any fears here," Russian President Vladimir Putin declared in June 2017, "but experts are aware that US nuclear submarines remain on duty in northern Norway.… We must protect [Russia's] shore accordingly."

> **Instead of leading the transition to a postcarbon economy, major powers are spending massively to enhance their military capabilities.**

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE EQUATION, AN INTENSIFYING arms race will block progress against climate change by siphoning resources needed for a global energy transition and by poisoning the relations among the great powers, impeding joint efforts to slow the warming.

With the signing of the Paris Agreement, it appeared that the great powers might unite in a global effort to slash greenhouse gas emissions quickly enough to avoid catastrophe, but those hopes have since receded. At the time, Obama emphasized that limiting global warming would require nations to work together in an environment of trust and peaceful cooperation. Instead of leading the global transition to a postcarbon energy system, however, the major powers are spending massively to enhance their military capabilities and engaging in conflict-provoking behaviors.

Since fiscal year 2016, the annual budget of the US Department of Defense has risen from $580 billion to $738 billion in fiscal year 2020. When the budget increases for each fiscal year since 2016 are combined, the United States will have spent an additional $380 billion on military programs by the end of this fiscal year—more than enough to jump-start the transition to a carbon-free economy. If the Pentagon budget rises as planned to $747 billion in fiscal year 2024, a total of $989 billion in additional spending will have been devoted to military operations and procurement over this period, leaving precious little money for a Green New Deal or any other scheme for systemic decarbonization.

Meanwhile, policy-makers in Washington, Beijing, and Moscow increasingly regard one another as implacable and dangerous adversaries. "As China and Russia seek to expand their global influence," then–Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats informed Congress in a January 2019 report, "they are eroding once well-established security norms and increasing the risk of regional conflicts." Chinese and Russian officials have been making similar statements about the United States. Secondary powers like India, Pakistan, and Turkey are also assuming increasingly militaristic postures, facilitating the potential spread of nuclear weapons and exacerbating regional tensions. In this environment, it is almost impossible to imagine future climate negotiations at which the great powers agree on concrete measures for a rapid transition to a clean energy economy.

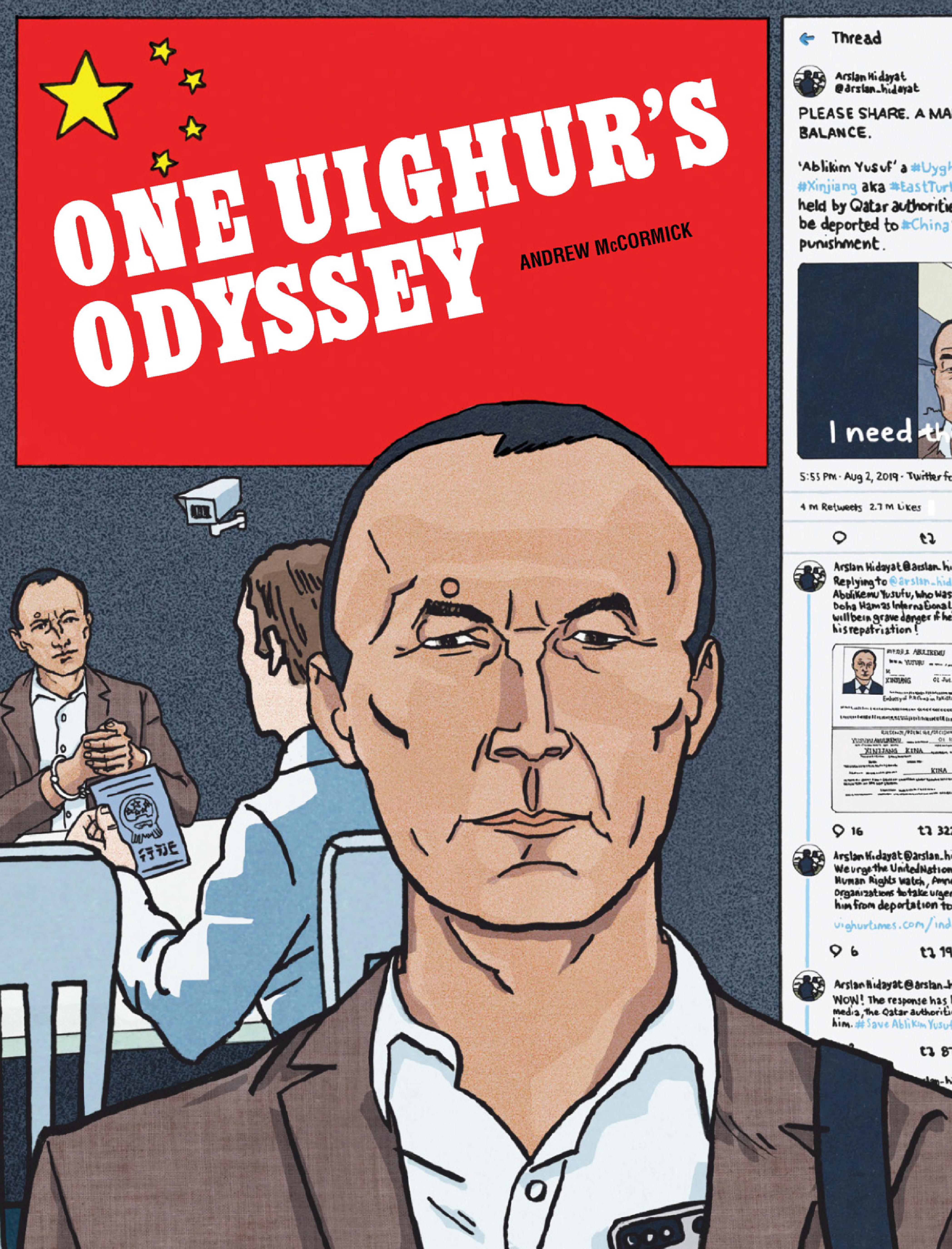
In a world constantly poised for nuclear war while facing widespread state decay from climate disruption, these twin threats would intermingle and intensify each other. Climate-related resource stresses and disputes would increase the level of global discord and the risk of nuclear escalation; the nuclear arms race would poison relations between states and make a global energy transition impossible.

But such an outcome is not inevitable. Mass movements have emerged to close coal plants, halt fracking, block the construction of fossil fuel infrastructure, and divest from fossil fuel companies. Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, with her School Strike 4 Climate campaign, has inspired millions of young people around the world to engage in climate activism. On the nuclear side, groups like Global Zero and Back From the Brink are campaigning for a global no-first-use policy by the nuclear-armed states; in Congress, progressive Democrats fought to deny funds for the procurement of new missiles that would have violated the terms of the INF Treaty.

What is essential and still largely missing is a recognition that climate and peace activism must be linked if the twin perils of global warming and nuclear war are to be overcome. People must understand that it will be very difficult to slow global warming unless the nuclear arms race is also slowed—and, likewise, that the risk of nuclear war will grow as long as nuclear-armed states are threatened by climate disruptions. Only by uniting our efforts toward climate and nuclear sanity in a joint campaign for human survival will it be possible to triumph over these destructive forces. ■

ONE UIGHUR'S ODYSSEY

ANDREW McCORMICK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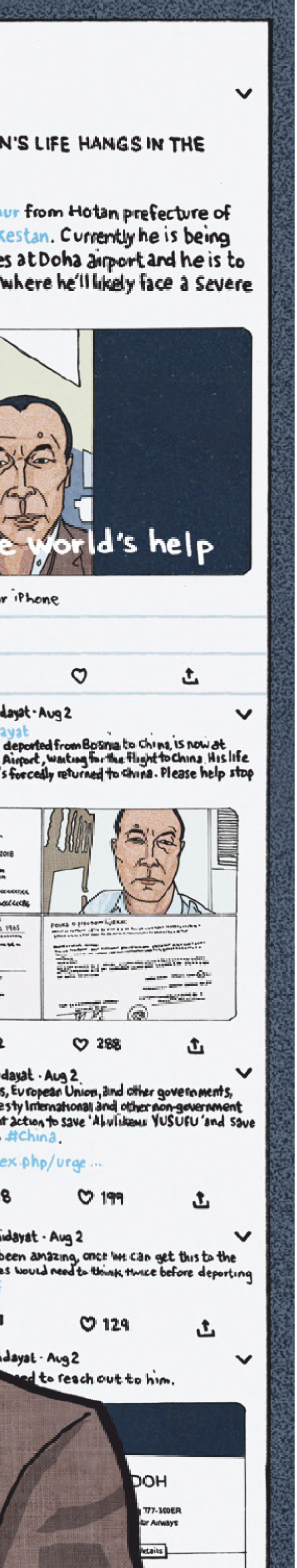
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After leaving his home in China's Xinjiang province, Ablikim Yusuf navigated a world hostile to his people before finding refuge in the United States.

Ablikim Yusuf never imagined he would see America. Born in Hotan, an oasis town in arid Xinjiang province, he spent most of his life in China. In 2013 he moved to Pakistan for work, where, until recently, he expected to remain.

But on the second Sunday in August 2019, after a whiplash series of life-altering events, Yusuf, a member of China's Uighur ethnic minority, stood before some 300 Uighur Americans in Fairfax, Virginia, in a makeshift mosque. It was Eid al-Adha, a day of celebration for Muslims.

Yusuf, who is 54 and slender, wore a blue-striped dress shirt. Speaking in Uighur, he thanked the group for welcoming him and supporting his recent arrival in the United States. He pledged to make good on their kindness. "I will do my best to help my people," he said.

It had been years since Yusuf was surrounded by so many Uighurs in celebration. Religious customs and ceremonies are largely banned in Xinjiang, which in recent years has become the site of a sprawling humanitarian crisis at the hands of the Chinese government. Human rights groups estimate that more than 1 million Uighurs and other minorities have been arbitrarily interned in facilities that the Chinese Communist Party terms "vocational training centers" but, in reality, more resemble concentration camps, with torture, sexual assault, and death all documented as taking place inside. Outside the centers, Xinjiang's citizens are subject to extensive surveillance, under which all aspects of Uighur and Muslim life—growing a beard, attending services at a mosque—might be cause for arrest.

> **Xinjiang's citizens are subject to extensive surveillance, under which all aspects of Uighur and Muslim life might be cause for arrest.**

Yet in Fairfax, Yusuf found dancing and Uighur fashion on prominent display. Homemade dishes—cucumber salads, crispy spring rolls, skewers of seasoned chicken and lamb—were doled out generously from foil containers. And all around, families sat chatting, gossiping, laughing. It was fascinating, he said, like something from the past.

Just a week earlier, Yusuf had been stuck in Qatar's Hamad International Airport, facing deportation to Beijing. Uighurs who have traveled abroad are a special target for the Chinese authorities; for a moment, he seemed all but certain to become one more victim of the camps.

Instead, a rapid campaign by activists, much of it waged online, stalled his deportation and ultimately won him refuge in the United States. So, improbably, there he was in Virginia, some 7,000 miles from the life he had known.

That Sunday, well-wishers surrounded Yusuf to offer support and words of encouragement. "We Uighurs stand with our brothers and sisters," one man told him. "We don't have much, but we support you with our whole hearts."

Eid al-Adha is a holiday of sacrifice, and it's traditional in some Muslim cultures to slaughter a cow, goat, or sheep. Members of one family invited Yusuf to join them at a halal slaughterhouse in Maryland that many Muslims around Washington, DC, use for special occasions. He helped the family clean a sheep that they had procured from Uighur farmers nearby. Together, they bound the sheep's legs with rope and laid it gently on its side. Covering its eyes with cloth so it wouldn't see the blade, they read an Islamic blessing, and in one firm swipe to ensure the sheep did not suffer, they slit its throat. It was a memorable day and a very happy one, Yusuf said. It reminded him of home.

Throughout his life, Yusuf had been aware of the often poor treatment of Uighurs in China, he said, but he thought that if he obeyed the law, it would surely never affect him. After graduating from Xinjiang Radio and Television University in 1984 with a degree in Chinese language, he found employment with a state-run transportation company in Hotan. He later worked for the government directly, then set out on his own in 2007. In 2013 he married a Pakistani woman named Lubna, whom he met through a colleague. Yusuf moved to Islamabad in the years leading up to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a multibillion-dollar infrastructure project to boost trade between the two nations and now a (now faltering) center-

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Andrew McCormick is an independent journalist in New York. His work has appeared in The New York Times, The Atlantic, *and* Columbia Journalism Review. *He is a US Navy veteran.*

ILLUSTRATION BY **DANIEL ZALKUS**

Far from home: Yusuf on one of the many flights he took before arriving in the United States.

piece of China's continent-spanning Belt and Road Initiative. He owned an import-export company and managed shipments of fruits, nuts, juices, and machinery between Pakistan and China. Business was good, and he soon earned an official Belt and Road contract. The couple moved to Islamabad's upscale Bani Gala neighborhood, not far from Prime Minister Imran Khan's residence. In 2014 they welcomed a son, whom they named Ibrahim.

In April 2017, Yusuf flew to Shanghai on business. Unbeknownst to him—and, at the time, to much of the world—China's anti-Uighur campaign in Xinjiang was underway. Thus, when customs officials in Shanghai stopped him in the airport, seemingly for no other reason than that he was Uighur, Yusuf was shocked. He said the officials contacted authorities in Xinjiang, who directed that he be sent to Urumqi, Xinjiang's capital. A five-and-a-half-hour flight later, he arrived in Xinjiang.

Yusuf recalled being greeted in Urumqi by men who he believes were *guobao*—Chinese state security, ubiquitous in Xinjiang. The men, in plain clothes, loaded him into an unmarked car and drove to a hilltop facility on the outskirts of town, he said. There, under an array of bright lights and video cameras, he was interrogated for four days.

The men demanded to know what he was doing in Pakistan. Who had he met there? What did he do with the money he was making? And crucially, what did he think about China? Yusuf insisted he was just an ordinary businessman. He bore China no ill will, he said; moreover, his detention could threaten an open Belt and Road contract. It was that last point, he said—and perhaps the quality of his Chinese—that ultimately persuaded his captors to relent; he was allowed to go home to Pakistan, albeit with a written order to return to Xinjiang in a month.

Back in Islamabad, Yusuf was furious. "I totally lost trust in the country," he said of China. Certain he would meet the same fate or worse if he returned home, he stayed in Pakistan. After about a month, he received word from his sister in Hotan: The police were in their family home, asking about him and making threats. Days later, his brother went missing.

Dismayed, Yusuf did everything he could to help locate his brother. He reached out to his brother's friends, but the lines were dead. An answer finally came from a colleague in Urumqi over WeChat. His brother was in the classroom—a euphemism for having been sent to the camps. *Xuexi ban*: He is studying.

In time, even Pakistan came to feel unsafe for Yusuf. In July 2018 he attended a party with a business associate. There he was introduced to a group of men who, upon learning he was originally from Xinjiang, told the others present that they recently helped deport nine Uighurs to China. The men spoke in Urdu, he said, apparently thinking he couldn't understand, but he did. He recalled that they said it was easy to send the Uighurs back and that they were paid handsomely to do it. (The Pakistani Embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment regarding the country's treatment of Uighurs.)

About a month later, when he applied for a visa to stay on in Pakistan, the Interior Ministry turned him down. "You guys are supposed to go back to your homeland," Yusuf said he was told. Then his bank account was frozen, and he was no longer able to run his business.

According to Patrick Poon, a China researcher at Amnesty International, Pakistan is one of several countries (including Muslim ones) that not only tolerate the abuses in Xinjiang but also in some cases actively support Beijing's efforts. "It's quite obvious some countries are putting their economic development and business interests above human rights," he said.

> **"It's quite obvious some countries are putting their business interests above human rights."**
>
> —Patrick Poon, Amnesty International

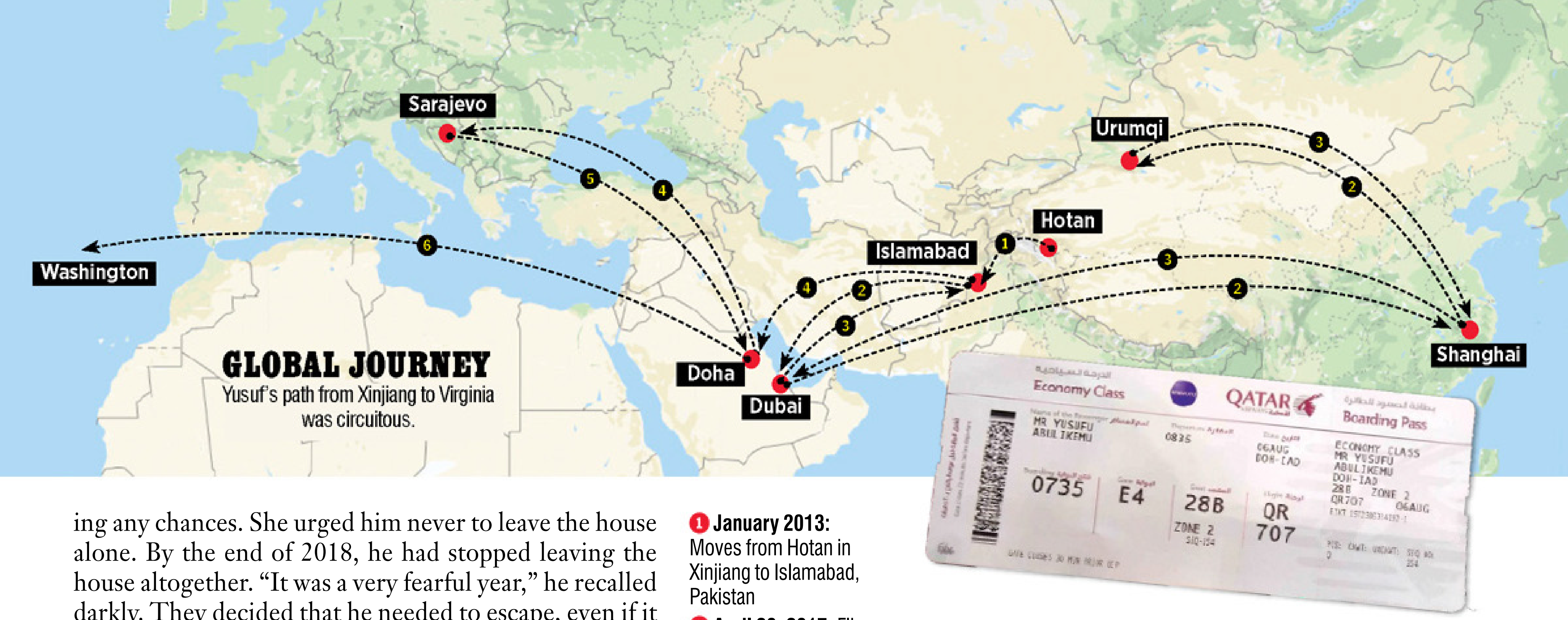
In December 2018, a spokesperson for Pakistan's Foreign Affairs Ministry accused journalists of sensationalizing China's Xinjiang policy and "spreading false information." The prime minister, who postures as a defender of Islam on the world stage, has claimed ignorance regarding China's actions. The following July, Pakistan was among 37 countries to publicly back that policy in a signed letter to the United Nations.

Economic considerations certainly account for this sycophancy, but other countries' own authoritarian tendencies shouldn't be ignored here, explained Sophie Richardson, the China director at Human Rights Watch. "I would be willing to believe there are people in [the Pakistani] government who believe that what's happening in Xinjiang is just the right way to go," she said.

Yusuf and Lubna weren't tak-

Close the camps: Activists in Istanbul called on China to close detention camps holding an estimated 1 million Uighurs and other minorities.

TOP: COURTESY OF ABLIKIM YUSUF; BOTTOM: REUTERS



GLOBAL JOURNEY
Yusuf’s path from Xinjiang to Virginia was circuitous.

Economy Class
QATAR
Boarding Pass
MR YUSUFU
ABULIKEMU
0835
06AUG
DOH-IAD
0735
E4
28B
ZONE 2
QR
707
ECONOMY CLASS
MR YUSUFU
ABULIKEMU
DOH-IAD
28B ZONE 2
QR707 06AUG

① January 2013: Moves from Hotan in Xinjiang to Islamabad, Pakistan

② April 20, 2017: Flies to Shanghai on business (via Dubai, United Arab Emirates); is sent involuntarily to Urumqi in Xinjiang

③ April 30, 2017: Returns to Islamabad (via Shanghai and Dubai)

● January 2019: Attempts to leave Pakistan via Karachi

④ July 31, 2019: Flies from Islamabad to Doha, Qatar, then to Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

⑤ August 2, 2019: Flies from Sarajevo to Doha (with ticket on August 3 to Beijing)

⑥ August 6, 2019: Flies from Doha to Washington; spends first night in the US, residing since then in Fairfax, Virginia

ing any chances. She urged him never to leave the house alone. By the end of 2018, he had stopped leaving the house altogether. “It was a very fearful year,” he recalled darkly. They decided that he needed to escape, even if it meant leaving her and Ibrahim behind.

But there was a problem: Yusuf had lost his passport in late 2017, and the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad wouldn’t replace it. Instead, he received a “travel document” for Uighurs, which looks like a passport but isn’t. The document states that the bearer is entitled to travel between countries, but whether the person is allowed entry is dependent on a country’s willingness to honor the document. For China, such documents function as an implicit means of forcing people to return. Thus began Yusuf’s fraught and incredible journey around the world

YUSUF’S FIRST ATTEMPT TO LEAVE PAKISTAN CAME in January 2019. He was turned away at the airport in Islamabad, so he went to Karachi instead. There, he was told that he would need an exit permit affirming that he carried no debt and had no criminal record in Pakistan. He decided it was too risky to seek the exit permit in person, so he appealed to his business and social contacts for help, and in late July the permit arrived—a small miracle. Soon after, he took a cab to Islamabad International Airport; a friend of a friend who worked there was on hand to help see him through.

From there, the plan was simple. He flew to Qatar and went on to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has no visa requirement for Chinese travelers. He planned to then buy a ticket to China—a destination that customs officials would surely permit, given his travel document—with a layover in Germany, likely in Frankfurt. There, finally, he would claim asylum.

But Yusuf never made it past Bosnian border control: Officials declined to recognize his travel document. He was sent back to Doha and booked on a Qatar Airways flight to Beijing.

Before departing, he contacted Lubna for what he thought might be the last time. If she never heard from him again, he begged her to speak out—to stand in front of the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad and “make a noise for him and the Uighur people.” She told him she would, and they bade each other a tearful goodbye. Yusuf wondered if there was anything else he could do.

With nothing to lose, he recorded a video on his phone to share on Facebook. “My name is Ablikim,” he started, with the airport’s glowing shops and bustling passengers filling the frame behind him. “I am currently being held at Doha airport, about to be deported to Beijing, China…. I need the world’s help.”

Against all odds, the post went viral. Across social platforms and around the world, Uighurs and human rights leaders shared his story, using the hashtag SaveAblikimYusuf. And Yusuf, one man in a crisis that has affected millions, became global news.

Tahir Imin, a prominent Uighur activist and academic in DC, was at home working on a paper when an associate in Turkey sent him the clip. Imin added it to a WhatsApp group of journalists and activists. Soon he was connected with Kimberley Motley, an international human rights lawyer who agreed to represent Yusuf. Motley, in a movie theater in North Carolina at the time, immediately e-mailed the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to launch a formal asylum petition on his behalf. Meanwhile, Omer Kanat, who directs the Uyghur Human Rights Project in DC, blasted e-mails to State Department contacts, who likewise launched into action.

Qatar, suddenly under pressure from the UNHCR and the United States—and with protesters outside its embassy in Washington, to boot—agreed to delay Yusuf’s deportation. Officials escorted him to an airport hotel, where he was determined to remain until he was safe. It wasn’t long, however, before more officials came knocking at his door. First there were Qatari police officers. The Chinese ambassador to Qatar wanted to meet him, they said. Motley, who communicated with him through Imin, advised against it, so Yusuf told the men to go away.

In DC the State Department lobbied countries that might accept Yusuf, even temporarily. They all declined. The decision to allow him to come directly to the United States was made quickly, Motley said. Everything seemed on the right track, and activists, including Imin, were beginning to breathe easy.

Then a text arrived from Yusuf that read, “They are sending me back to China. Goodbye.”

In the midst of the diplomatic maneuvering, Yusuf recalled, a woman claiming to represent the Chinese Embassy paid him a visit at the hotel. She was accompanied by a group of men. Stop with this social media

> “My name is Ablikim. I am currently being held at Doha airport, about to be deported to Beijing, China…. I need the world’s help.”
>
> —Yusuf, in his viral video recorded at a Qatari airport

AMERICANA
WELCOME
GLOBAL ENTRY
SEALS OFFICE
DEFERRED
INSPECTION

Home at last? Yusuf at Dulles International Airport on August 6, 2019. Local Uighur leaders and a State Department official went to greet him after his arduous journey.

COURTESY OF ABLIKIM YUSUF

campaign, she told him through the door. He refused and told her, too, to leave. (The Chinese Embassy in Qatar denied that it sent a woman to his room or made any demands of his use of social media. Consular officials went to the airport only to offer him assistance and take him refreshments, "our normal practice based on humanitarian considerations," an embassy representative said.)

A short time later, more men showed up on their own. When Yusuf opened the door—a mistake, he said—they burst into the room and slammed him to the ground. He had two choices: He could get on a plane to China willingly, or they would put him on one.

> **"Where is [Xinjiang]? Where is that in China?... That's tough stuff."**
>
> —President Donald Trump

It's a dangerous time for Uighurs in the world. Despite international pressure, China's crackdown—which the government insists is necessary to curb extremism—has only shown signs of expanding. Elsewhere, Uighurs face increasing pressure from governments that are swayed by China's political and economic clout and oppose any interference in another country's internal affairs, often because of their own repressive policies. Under the UN Convention Against Torture, to which Qatar is a signatory, no nation is required to deport someone to a country where that person has a reasonable fear of torture or abuse. But in the case of the Uighurs, China's influence has had a tendency to override the convention.

Motley had told Yusuf that if the authorities in Doha tried to force him onto a plane, he should go kicking and screaming. So he did.

"No China! No China!" he yelled in Urdu, thrashing and writhing as the men continued to strong-arm him. Eventually, they gave up and moved him to a quiet room at the airport.

A voice message came through from Imin, in English, explaining that the US government and international agencies took up Yusuf's case after hearing about his situation. Before long, his lawyer sent him a text message informing him that he was cleared for takeoff—to the United States. "I thought, 'Is this my dream?'" he said later. "'I don't want to wake up.'" He called Lubna, and now they cried tears of joy.

The next morning, he boarded Qatar Airways Flight 707 to Washington Dulles International Airport. Even in the air, he was anxious. He worried that the plane would turn around suddenly or a Chinese official would appear in the aisle.

But on Tuesday, August 6, around 3 pm, the plane touched down at Dulles. When he saw Imin in the airport, smiling with a State Department official at his side, Yusuf was so happy that he cried out.

If Yusuf's story is emblematic of China's increasingly long reach in the world, it also represents a shift in the Uighur American diaspora, which members said has been forever changed by China's atrocities.

The Uighur community in DC raised about $5,000 to help Yusuf find his feet. In the past, raising this sum for a refugee might have taken weeks, but in his case, it took less than 24 hours, Kanat said—a clear sign of the solidarity that has come to permeate the diaspora amid hardship. "This [crisis] was a turning point," he said. "Uighurs who were not involved in any kind of activities and had distanced themselves from political activities… all became very active."

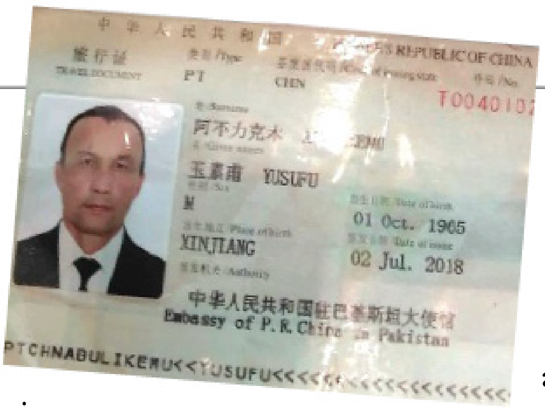
There are more than 8,000 Uighurs living in the United States, according to an October estimate by a Uighur scholar in Colorado, with the greatest concentration in the DC area, especially in Fairfax. The US Uighur population is not the biggest (larger expat groups exist in Turkey and parts of Central Asia), but according to Kanat, it stands out for the role it plays in advocating for Uighurs on the world stage.

When Kanat moved to the United States in the late 1990s—at which point the situation in China was already perilous for Uighurs—it was a challenge for activists to find a friendly ear in DC. "We had a lot of difficulty explaining who the Uighur people are," he recalled. An Amnesty International report in 1999 documenting the "gross violations of human rights" in Xinjiang provided an opportunity, and the Uighurs found an early ally in California's Representative Tom Lantos, a Holocaust survivor and frequent champion of human rights.

The Uighur cohort in DC grew (to include Rebiya Kadeer, a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize upon her release from a Chinese prison in 2005), and activists became more adept at navigating the capital's officialdom. Some politicians have become reliable advocates—Representative Jim McGovern and Senator Marco Rubio, who lead the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, for example, and Representatives Chris Smith and Brad Sherman, who last year introduced bills to condemn and punish China.

In general, though, human rights groups have criticized the US response as slow and indecisive. "For the first year or two, what we heard was a lot of rhetoric without much consequential policy follow-up," Richardson of Human Rights Watch said. But recent developments are promising, including the House's passage of the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act last month and a round of visa restrictions targeting Chinese officials, instituted by Donald Trump's administration in October.

When it comes to the White House, anything that has



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Embassy of P. R. China in Pakistan
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been done to help the Uighurs may stem from the Trump administration's emphasis on "religious freedom" at home and abroad. In September at a luncheon hosted by a Christian nonprofit, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo shared Yusuf's story and said the State Department's role "demonstrates the lengths that America goes to defend religious freedom around the world."

Vice President Mike Pence, frequently critical of China, is also generally regarded as an ally of the Uighurs, even if the administration's policies aren't exactly Muslim-friendly. Trump has largely avoided comment on the matter. His first and apparently only public remarks on Xinjiang came at a "religious freedom" event at the Oval Office in July, when a Uighur woman, Jewher Ilham, recounted the story of her father's detention. "That's tough stuff," the president told her, after asking about Xinjiang, "Where is that? Where is that in China?"

Getting Yusuf's wife and son to the United States will likely prove an uphill battle.

After Yusuf landed in Virginia, Imin and others helped him find a place to stay: a room in a house occupied by five other Uighur men on a leafy street in Fairfax. Set in an English basement, the room was small and didn't get much light, but to Yusuf it felt enormous. "I was free," he said. "I was free."

Yusuf said he was surprised by a lot of things about America: It was greener and the people were friendlier than he expected. It was a relief not to feel he always had to watch his back. Mundane details also struck him as remarkable—for example, Fairfax's tidy lawns, orderly traffic, and the relative lack of people smoking on the street.

Four days a week, Yusuf takes English classes, twice at an Anglican church in Fairfax and twice at another nearby church, where missionaries ejected from Xinjiang serve the Uighur community in Virginia. He said he might start a business one day—a Uighur restaurant, perhaps, or something like the company he ran in Pakistan. In any case, he hopes he can give back to the community.

In October, Motley, who continues to represent Yusuf legally, filed his formal application for asylum. The wait can be notoriously long, but she hopes the media attention on his case and Pompeo's remarks about it might help expedite the process.

Getting Yusuf's wife and son to the United States, on the other hand, will likely prove an uphill battle, as bringing them here on his account would require him to have permanent residence or citizenship. But Lubna and Ibrahim might qualify for asylum on their own, Motley said. The two are safe for now but fear that Pakistan's cooperation with China could soon place them in jeopardy as well.

In the meantime, Yusuf speaks with Lubna every day. When he eats, he props the phone up beside him with the camera on so they can see each other. He knows that the chances of getting her and Ibrahim to the United States are slim—but so were his. So Yusuf has vowed to try. "That would be my dream," he said. "That would be paradise for me." ■

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Letters

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(continued from page 2)

unspoken assumptions, passions, and above all, actions. Taken together, these forces constitute what we call cultural values, and they are powerful indeed.

The white males who left Europe for Africa, India, and the Americas in the 17th century shared an assumption that the earth was theirs and that native peoples could be disregarded—or worse. Thus, the displacement of natives by the Puritans, the enslavement of Africans and African Americans, and the depredations of Manifest Destiny were of a piece with what Europeans were doing in India and Africa. If we seek to identify the informing values of our national development over the years, they can most accurately be described as male dominance, racism, and the acquisition of wealth.

As Immerwahr argues, the climate crisis offers the United States an opportunity to change its course from the mistakes of the past toward a world in which every person has the right to a home, to health care, to education, and to a living wage.

Dwight Gibb
SEATTLE

The Collective Is Political

This is just a brief note to thank Kate Aronoff for the sharply insightful review of Jonathan Safran Foer's *We Are the Weather* [November 11/18]. Her opening parody of Foer is pitch-perfect, as are her passing observations regarding Michael Chabon and Jonathan Franzen.

Yes, those of us who can should cut back on or just stop eating meat. But only strong collective action has any chance of avoiding disaster.

Arnold Krupat
HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON, N.Y.

Aronoff does a fine job of pooh-poohing the belief of Foer and a few other novelists that individual actions might help mitigate climate change. Everything she says about national mobilization, corporate agriculture, and self-serving capitalist interests is true.

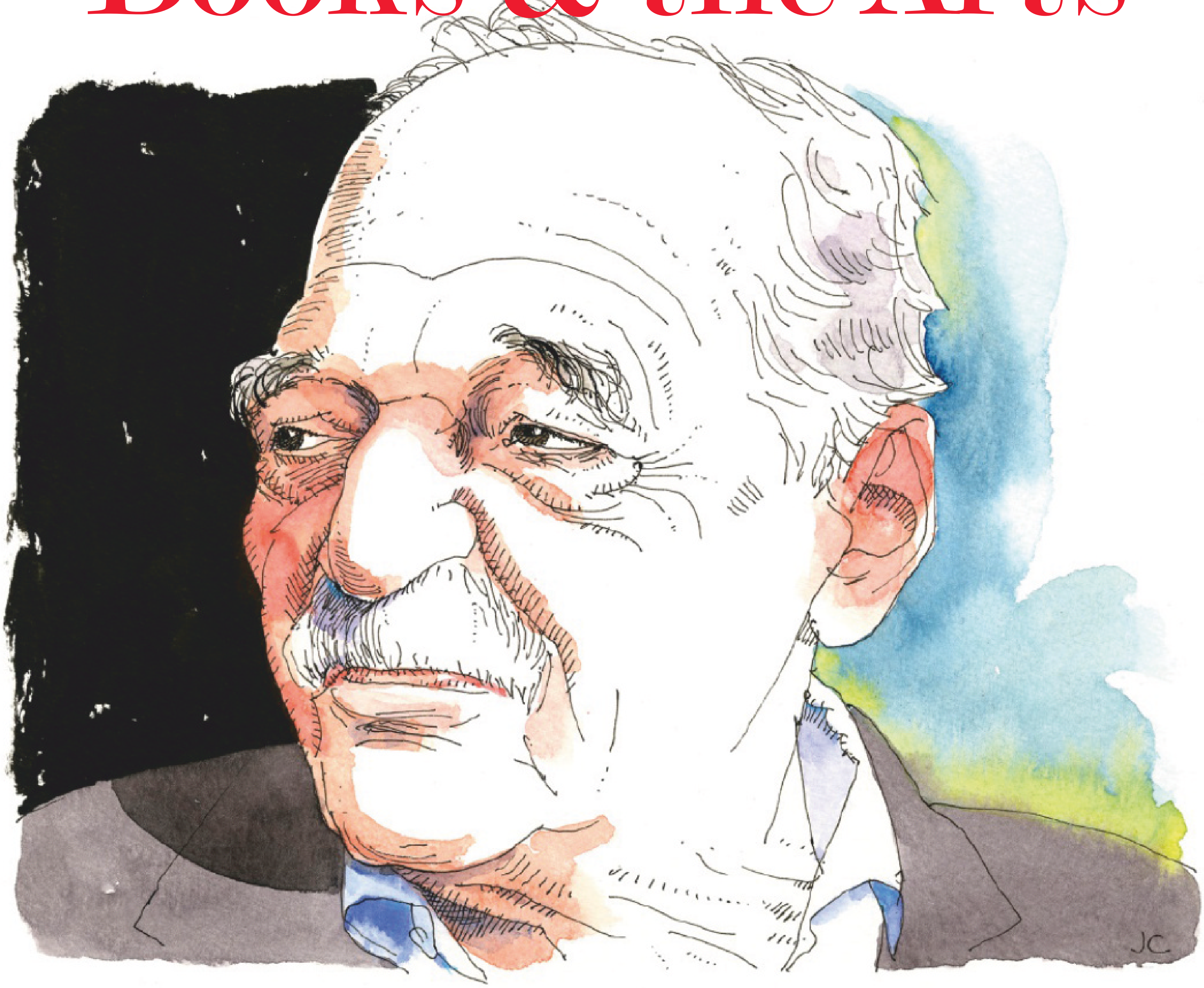
However, the countervailing idea that the solution to climate change is to wait until the left wing of the Democratic Party gains sufficient clout to enact, say, a Green New Deal is no less delusional than the ideas of the authors Aronoff criticizes. The message that Greta Thunberg and the youth of the world are sending is that the time for talking, writing essays, and waiting for some transformative future government program to come to fruition has long passed. We as individuals (and collectively, if we can) should be doing something different now! If that means eating less meat, taking a train to Philadelphia instead of a plane to London, and giving the money we save by doing so to a struggling community center so it can install a more efficient HVAC system, then perhaps we should do it.

The Nation has well over 100,000 subscribers, a good portion of whom are leaders in their communities. If they change their behavior in response to climate change, others will notice and follow suit. If they do nothing, others will notice and remain complacent.

Haydon Rochester Jr.
ONANCOCK, VA.

Correction

Bryce Covert's article "The Medicaid Expansion Effect" [December 30/January 6] misattributed the authorship of a report, "The Missing Medicaid Millions." The authors are Jake Haselswerdt, Michael Sances, and Sean McElwee.



REALITY IS THE BETTER WRITER

The nonfiction of Gabriel García Márquez

by TONY WOOD

On October 26, 1949, in the city of Cartagena on Colombia's Caribbean coast, a young journalist named Gabriel García Márquez went to the convent of Santa Clara to see its crypt being emptied prior to the building's demolition. When the workers took a pickax to one of the burial niches by the altar, "the stone shattered at the first blow…and a stream of living hair the intense color of copper spilled out of the crypt." The workers eventually brought out more than 20 meters of tresses attached to the skull of a young girl. Watching from a slight distance, García Márquez recalled a story his grandmother told him as a boy: "the legend of a little twelve-year-old marquise with hair that trailed behind her like a bridal train, who had died of rabies caused by a dog bite and was venerated in the towns along the Caribbean coast for the many miracles she had performed."

The incident was the inspiration for an article he wrote that day for *El Universal*, the paper where he was then working, and a novel, *Of Love and Other Demons*, that appeared 45 years later. The story, recounted in the preface to the novel, neatly captures the way fiction and reportage were constantly interwoven across the breadth of García Márquez's career—the way oral traditions, legends, and popular memories

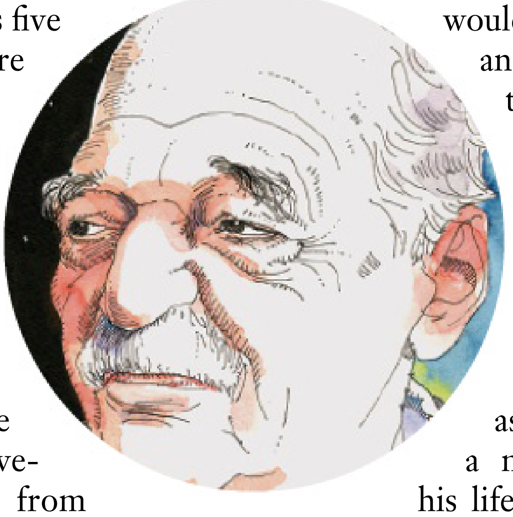
---

Tony Wood is a member of the editorial board of New Left Review *and the author of* Russia Without Putin.

ILLUSTRATION BY **JOE CIARDIELLO**

and the evidence of his eyes and ears work to nourish and creatively enrich each other, often across many years. In fact, while his novels and stories may have won him global renown, journalism was his first calling. Not only was it foundational to his development as a writer, but it also remained integral to his work and public persona throughout his life, from his early days as a cub reporter in Colombia until his death in Mexico in 2014.

To begin with, it was the journalism that enabled him to make a precarious living while he wrote fiction, often at night. Yet even after the global success of his 1967 novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, he continued to write articles, commentaries, and reported pieces at an impressive rate. In Spanish, his collected *Obra Periodística*—not including three book-length works of reportage—spans five volumes, comprising more than 3,000 pages. *The Scandal of the Century* is the first English-language selection from this vast body of work. Long overdue, it provides a fairly representative slice of García Márquez's journalistic output. In the first half, we track his movements across the globe, from 1940s Colombia through a string of international assignments in the '50s and '60s: Rome, Paris, Budapest, Caracas, and Havana, among many others. In the latter half, we find a more rooted García Márquez, largely through the columns he wrote for *El País* in the '80s from Mexico City, where he lived much of the time from the '70s onward. While it captures the geographical breadth of García Márquez's journalistic work, the book makes some significant omissions that tend to downplay his radical politics. The result is to give us a somewhat truncated view of a writer who told an interviewer in 1978 that "there is no act in my life which is not a political act."



Throughout García Márquez's career, literature and journalism had highly porous boundaries. His fiction and his nonfiction for newspapers and magazines can be seen as facets of a single, lifelong narrative enterprise. Indeed, we might even think of both kinds of writing not as distinct genres, to be shelved separately as fiction and nonfiction, but as reportage in different registers or realms of reality. From that point of view, it's less surprising that García Márquez observed in 1991, "My books are the books of a journalist."

The Scandal of the Century and Other Writings
By Gabriel García Márquez
Translated by Anne McLean
Edited by Cristóbal Pera
Alfred A. Knopf. 336 pp. $27.95

Born in 1927, García Márquez was raised on Colombia's Caribbean coast and then went to secondary school in the highland town of Zipaquirá, near Bogotá. In *The Fragrance of Guava*, a 1982 set of interviews with his friend the Colombian writer and diplomat Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, he recalled an education with distinct Marxist influences: During breaks, "the algebra teacher would talk to us about historical materialism, the chemistry teacher would lend us books by Lenin and the history teacher would talk about class struggle." He emerged convinced that "socialism was the immediate destiny of humankind." Though he briefly joined a Communist Party cell in his early 20s, he described himself as a sympathizer rather than a militant, and throughout his life, he tried to navigate the tension between close and committed support for the radical left and critical independence from it.

García Márquez started studying law in Bogotá but abandoned his studies in 1948, amid the wave of violence that followed the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, the presidential candidate of the Liberal Party. Returning to the coast, García Márquez began his journalistic career at *El Universal* in Cartagena, and over the next few years, he had spells as a columnist for *El Heraldo* in Barranquilla before moving back to the capital in 1954 to work for *El Espectador*.

From early on, García Márquez's journalism showed a recurrent concern with the blurry frontiers between real events on the one hand and legends and literature on the other—and he strongly emphasized how often the former outdo the latter in delirious invention. In a wonderful series from March 1954 on the "strange idolatry" of the people of La Sierpe in coastal Colombia, he writes of the local veneration of a cedar plank supposedly bearing an image of the Virgin Mary in its knots and grain before telling his readers about the town's cult of St. Kidney, a cow organ apparently displaying the face of Jesus. There is, to be sure, an element of gentle mockery in his description of these beliefs, but more telling is the weight he gives them as a genuine expression of what La Sierpe's residents think. For much of humanity, it's the fantastical that helps make sense of reality, not the other way around.

Soon after his return to Bogotá, García Márquez wrote a short piece that captures his thoughts about the role of journalism in society. The work of a reporter is not simply to transmit facts and information but also to record and participate in the collective discussion of events, a habit that goes back to the dawn of humanity. "Without doubt," he jokes, "the first sensational news produced—after creation—was the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise." He then imagines the Fall being retold as a crime story: "An apple was the cause of the tragedy." For García Márquez, the printed word is only the point of departure for those collective discussions. Every town, he insists, has its reporters, amateur as well as professional, who help shift the conversation from the page to the streets: "There will always be a man reading an article in the corner of a drugstore, and there will always—because this is the funny thing—be a group of citizens ready to listen to him, even if just to feel the democratic pleasure of not agreeing with him." From this perspective, journalism and fiction are just different names for the same enterprise of telling and retelling, of contesting and comprehending a community's stories.

García Márquez's stint as a reporter in Bogotá was brief but dramatic. In early 1955, he achieved nationwide renown for a series of interviews with the sailor Luis Alejandro Velasco, the sole survivor of a shipwreck who became a national hero. The Colombian Navy's official story was that his ship sank because of a storm. But from García Márquez's gripping reports—eventually collected and published in 1970 as *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor*—it became clear that the ship had been overburdened by the goods the crew was bringing illegally from the United States. The series landed García Márquez in hot water with the dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, and as a precaution, in July 1955 he persuaded *El Espectador* to send him to Europe as the newspaper's roving correspondent.

Based at first in Italy, García Márquez produced, among other things, a long

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series of articles under the rubric "The Scandal of the Century" about the case of Wilma Montesi, a young Italian woman who died under suspicious circumstances. As the investigation into her death unfolds, we are given a portrait of 1950s Italian society, in which traditional Catholic mores came increasingly into conflict with a fast-living culture of glamour and celebrity.

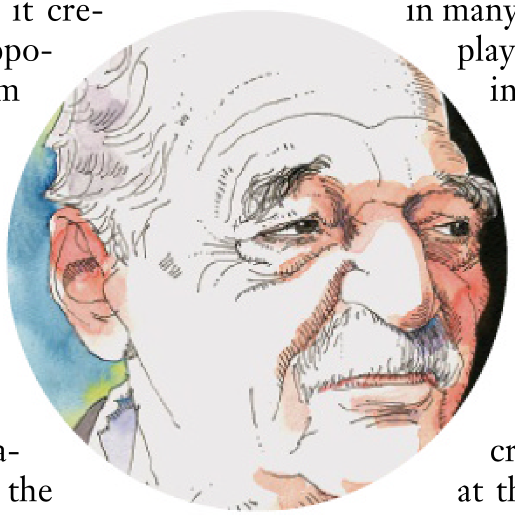
From Rome, García Márquez moved to Paris, where he immediately found himself stranded without a job: At the start of 1956, Rojas Pinilla shuttered *El Espectador* and other oppositional newspapers in the name of a "free but responsible press." By this time, most of Latin America was under the rule of right-wing authoritarians, and García Márquez chose to stay in Europe, falling in with a growing number of Latin American exiles who had fled the ever more stifling political climate in their countries and were now clustered in cheap hotels on the Left Bank. He later recalled one of his neighbors, the Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, leaning out of his window one day and shouting, "The man has fallen!" The various exiles in the neighborhood perked their ears, hoping that Guillén was talking about their dictator. (In this case, it was Argentina's Juan Domingo Perón.)

García Márquez's time in Paris coincided, of course, with France's ferocious counterinsurgency in Algeria and its repression of anticolonial activism within its own borders. The Paris police zealously targeted anyone they thought looked like an Arab, and García Márquez recalled being dragged to jail several times during police roundups of Algerians. As a result, he made friends with members of the Algerian National Liberation Front, who suggested that he might as well be guilty of helping them if he was going to get arrested anyway and put him to work for their cause. Hence García Márquez could later truthfully claim that "the Algerian Revolution is the only one for which I've actually been imprisoned."

In these years, he made two politically formative trips to the Eastern Bloc—the first, in 1955, to Poland and Czechoslovakia and the second, in 1957, to East Germany, Hungary, and the Soviet Union. His reports on these journeys are especially rich and fascinating, recording his first encounters with actually existing socialism. He was on the whole quite positive about his time in the USSR, but his experiences in Hungary and East Germany convinced him, as he put it later, that "what they had in the so-called people's democracies was not authentic socialism" because "it was a system imposed from the outside by the Soviet Union through dogmatic local communist parties with no imagination."

While in Budapest, García Márquez managed to elude his minders and wander the streets of a city still scarred by the crushing of the 1956 popular uprising by Soviet tanks. "Almost a year after the events that stirred the world," he wrote, "Budapest is still a provisional city. I saw extensive sectors where the streetcar tracks have not been replaced and which are still closed to traffic. The crowds, badly dressed, sad…stand in endless lines to buy basic necessities. The stores that were destroyed and looted are still being rebuilt." García Márquez visited taverns in a working-class neighborhood, where he found "the seed of the uprising" still alive "despite the military regime, the Soviet intervention and the apparent tranquility that reigns." (Sadly not included in *The Scandal of the Century* is his perceptive portrait of János Kádár's regime, installed after the Soviet intervention, in which García Márquez displayed sympathy with the uprising as well as an understanding of the political dilemmas it created for those whose opposition to domination from Moscow didn't mean they wished for a return of the reactionary ancien régime.)

García Márquez's dispatches from behind the Iron Curtain were written for *Momento*, a magazine edited from Caracas by Mendoza, and at the end of 1957, he moved to the Venezuelan capital to work on staff at the magazine. He arrived just in time to witness the fall of the dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez in January 1958. Later that year, García Márquez wrote, "Venezuela was the freest country in the entire world." His descriptions of it evoke not only a chaotic, festive atmosphere but also an example of radically democratic mass politics: "Each time the government glimpsed some danger, it immediately consulted the people by direct channels, and the people took to the streets against any attempt at regression. The most delicate official decisions were made in the public arena." Inspiring as this may have been for someone of García Márquez's socialist sympathies, however, it turned out to be only the prelude to a still more dramatic revolutionary upheaval that began in Cuba the next year.



For García Márquez as for many Latin Americans of his generation, the Cuban Revolution was a political watershed: It shaped allegiances and drew ideological battle lines across the region for decades to come. This was as much because of the hemispheric chain reactions it generated as because of what happened in Cuba itself. For the radical left, the island was a bridgehead in the struggle to dismantle the region's centuries-old inequalities. For local elites and the United States, Cuba set a dangerous precedent that had to be smashed in the name of anti-communism. What García Márquez saw in Cuba was the possibility of a different kind of socialism, one that escaped the coercion and gray bureaucracy he had witnessed in the Eastern Bloc and that was made to Latin American specifications—what he called "a human and visible socialism, that you can touch with your hands."

García Márquez traveled to Cuba less than three weeks after the fall of the military strongman Fulgencio Batista, which in many ways appeared to be a replay of the scenes he witnessed in Venezuela 12 months earlier. "For those of us who had lived in Caracas for all of the previous year," he wrote in an article reflecting on his first encounter with the Cuban Revolution, "the feverish atmosphere and creative disorder of Havana at the beginning of 1959 was not a novelty." *The Scandal of the Century* contains two later pieces devoted to Cuba, which retrospectively convey his enthusiasm for the carnival atmosphere of the revolution's early stages as well as his keen eye for detail. At one point, he describes how some Cuban soldiers who hadn't sided with Fidel Castro's rebels initially confined themselves to their barracks so that they could grow their beards and pretend to have been *barbudos* all along.

He soon found himself acting as a participant-observer. From September 1960 to May 1961, García Márquez worked for Prensa Latina, the press agency set up by the new government in Havana, helping to establish its bureau in New York as well as shuttling between Colombia and the Cuban capital, where he worked alongside

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Formalwear

“everything takes form, even infinity”
—Gaston Bachelard,
from *The Dialectics of Outside and Inside*

So I died. Then I filled out a form.
It asked how I made do & a living
& where did I perform
my rotations? “We will inform
the living of your current
address,” said the form. “Here. Wear
this paper gown.” I peered
inside. I formed an opinion
of my torso, which was as I’d left it—
too solid from living large.
But I’ve left out a vital
detail: I lived
in the form of a young
woman once, like a formal gown
adorned in sequence. I was adored
& worn, in a fit
of pheromonal forms, in
& out & in. Left
for dead, I led existence on.
Time wore on. Time warred
on. A police officer
informed my father
of his cardiac arrest, warned me
I was next. The officer’s speech
was so formal I fell
into a love. We married. We exchanged
speech & touch. Formerly,
we’d said we’d
never. Then we reformed.
If not for the police, I’d have never
worn white. If not for the lice,
I’d have never left
my hair on my father’s grave.

DEVON WALKER-FIGUEROA

other giants of radical journalism such as Rodolfo Walsh. (It was Walsh who uncovered the US plans to invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs; he would be murdered by the Argentine military dictatorship in 1977.) But by the middle of 1961, García Márquez had started to become uneasy with the increasing sway of the Cuban Communist Party over the island’s new revolutionary institutions. Rather than risk a confrontation, in which he might end up tarred as a counterrevolutionary, he opted to take some distance: “I marginalized myself in silence,” he later told Mendoza, “while I kept writing my books.”

García Márquez’s first novel, *Leaf Storm*, was published shortly before he left Colombia in 1955, with a small print run, and it received little attention. It was followed by two more novels, *No One Writes to the Colonel* and *In Evil Hour*, and a collection of stories, *Big Mama’s Funeral*. But it was the years after his 1961 departure from Cuba that proved most significant for his career as a writer of fiction. He settled in Mexico, where he began working on a novel inspired by the trials of former officials of the Batista regime that he witnessed in Cuba before switching to a subject closer to his heart: the wondrous world of his childhood on Colombia’s Caribbean coast.

Written in the mid-’60s and published in 1967, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* catapulted him to global fame. Translated into dozens of languages, the book had an immediate and profound impact on fiction across the world. Its astonishing success allowed him to become less a journalist who wrote fiction than a novelist who happened to write journalism. From now on, the balance between his two callings would be reversed—but he would continue to pursue them both.

Even as García Márquez attained global renown as a writer of fiction, neither his journalism nor his radical commitments tailed off. In fact, in the ’70s, quite the opposite was true. He remained a firm supporter of Cuba throughout the ’60s, and even though he broke with Castro over the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, publicly condemning the crushing of the Prague Spring, he stayed committed to the Cuban Revolution as a model for Latin American socialists. In the years after 1968, however, he engaged more actively with the radical left in the rest of the region and began to widen his geographical range far beyond it, devoting increasing attention to liberation movements in the developing world and to groups resisting the right-wing dictatorships that had seized power in most of Latin America. Chile loomed especially large in his thinking: The toppling of Salvador Allende by Augusto Pinochet in 1973 in a US-sponsored coup was a dark threshold for the Latin American left, confirming that local elites and Washington would not hesitate to dispense with democracy. In its wake, García Márquez announced that he would write no more fiction until Pinochet was gone, describing Allende's fall as "a personal catastrophe for me." (At this point he had already finished *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, which appeared in 1975, but owing to the dictator's firm grip on power, García Márquez eventually broke his promise, publishing *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* in 1981.)

García Márquez threw himself into editorial work, cofounding the left-wing magazine *Alternativa* in Bogotá in 1974, which aimed to weaken the long-standing hold on the media by Colombia's elites. The first issue was impounded by the police, and a year later paramilitaries bombed the magazine's offices, but it survived until 1980, providing García Márquez with an outlet for some of his finest political reporting. This included a fiery piece about the fall of Allende, interviews with CIA whistleblower Philip Agee and with Chilean and Argentine leftist guerrillas, and his celebrated account of the 1975 Cuban intervention in Angola, "Operation Carlota." There were also pieces on Vietnam and a richly evocative portrait of Portugal in the aftermath of the Carnation Revolution of 1974, which reminded him of Havana in 1959 (down to the profusion of military uniforms and facial hair).

It is striking that this period of heightened creativity and political activity gets so little space in *The Scandal of the Century*. Though the '70s take up almost an entire volume of his collected journalism in Spanish and spill over into another one, here we are given only two pieces on Cuba, from 1977 and 1978, in which he reflects on the early days of the revolution and discusses the ongoing impact of the US blockade, and a 1978 report on the Sandinista takeover of Nicaragua's National Palace in Managua. The effect is a dramatic scaling back of our sense of García Márquez's political commitments—their intensity and urgency as well as their geographical breadth and their significance in his political and intellectual development.

Instead, *The Scandal of the Century* gives

Opinion

It was a lean-to one could live in
so long as it never rained. It was

a grain of salt close up, looking
like a crystal, growing from itself

like an outcrop of land. It was a sail
opened in a storm. A memory lost.

A coin tossed at the wrong time,
declaring heads or tails. It had the air

of an aristocrat or the stench of a skunk.
No matter who bred it, it couldn't be fair.

It wasn't a buoy. It kept no one up.
It had the metallic notice of a gong.

It was a thoroughbred raced too soon,
or a setting moon, or a button lost or

undone. It only had one track and
when it sped up it was sure to derail.

It had a smile for a satellite
or a smirk for a son. Everyone

thought they recognized its face,
but, one by one, they were wrong.

JENNIFER MILITELLO

us a rather different kind of figure, devoting a third of its pages to the columns that García Márquez wrote for *El País* in the ’80s. Though lively and often entertaining, these tend to be slighter pieces and are much less politically engaged. Still, there are flashes of telling detail. In one column he describes a chalkboard that hung from the balcony of *El Espectador*’s offices in Bogotá in the 1930s and 40s with news updates written on it that attracted crowds that blocked traffic, applauded news they liked, and whistled at news they didn’t. “It was a form of active and immediate participation,” he notes. And in another we find García Márquez expressing his frustration with the way the brutal personalities and outlandish foibles of Latin America’s dictators continually outpaced the ingenuity of even the most creative novelists: “Latin American and Caribbean writers have to admit, hands on hearts, that reality is a better writer than we are.”

The ’80s brought the consolidation of García Márquez’s place in the global literary firmament. In 1982 he was awarded a Nobel Prize; in 1985 he published *Love in the Time of Cholera* and in 1989 *The General in His Labyrinth*. Yet even as his status as Latin America’s preeminent fiction writer was being consecrated, he reaffirmed the centrality of the reporter’s craft to his work. In a column written the year before he was given the Nobel Prize, he argues that “there is not a single line in any of my books that does not have its origin in a real event.” Published that year, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* describes a murder that took place in 1951 in the northern Colombian town of Sucre and reconstructs the tragic chain of events from eyewitness testimony and by interrogating the narrator’s memories of those times. He deploys the same techniques in his 1986 *Clandestine in Chile*, an account of a covert trip made by film director Miguel Littín to a country still under the brutal rule of Pinochet. Even García Márquez’s 2002 memoir, *Living to Tell the Tale*, is as much a work of journalism as an example of lyrical autobiography. He drew on his childhood recollections and interviewed family members and friends, as if doing a piece of sleuth work on himself. For him, the story to be pieced together was always interwoven with the social world in which it took place—and both had to be part of the telling. This time the subject was himself: After years of writing about others, his investigative eye was turned inward, the reporter fused with the reported.

García Márquez’s journalism almost always unfolded in the realm of print, of text on paper—seemingly a far cry from the digitized media landscape of today. Yet in his pursuit of fiction and reportage as parallel modes of collective storytelling, he explored phenomena we would find highly familiar: the blurring of genre boundaries, the feedback loops created between ongoing events and media depictions of them, the uncertain status of facts and memories.

Perhaps the most sustained demonstration of García Márquez’s mastery of these themes came late in life, with his 1996 *News of a Kidnapping*, which recounts the ordeals of several Colombian journalists kidnapped by the drug kingpin Pablo Escobar. As well as a portrayal of a country in crisis, racked by multiple forms of violence, it evokes the pervasive role of the media in contemporary life and in the process finds García Márquez putting his own profession under the microscope. Movingly recording the physical and psychological strains the journalists endured in captivity, he notes the ambiguous role that news outlets played throughout the kidnapping—providing a constant stream of information, updating the public in real time, conveying coded messages to the hostages, and raising the pressure on Colombia’s politicians to yield to the kidnappers’ demands. Ultimately, journalists were not only the victims at the heart of the story or observers as it developed but also participants in its making.

At one point in *News of a Kidnapping*, García Márquez delivers a brief aside that journalism is “power without a throne, luckily.” In the context of the book, he seems to mean power unburdened by the trappings and corruptions of political office. This is perhaps a curious assertion coming from a man who, as a journalist, spent a good deal of time in proximity to power and established friendships with Fidel Castro and François Mitterrand, among others. But I think he meant something else, too: that journalism’s power lies in its ability to speak from no fixed place. The power of the journalist comes from being able to float freely in the narrative medium that surrounds us, recording and reporting the news but also shaping the way we remember and speak about it. Throughout his career, García Márquez consistently sought to use that freedom, ranging back and forth between reportage and fiction, in order to show us how we might make it our own. ■

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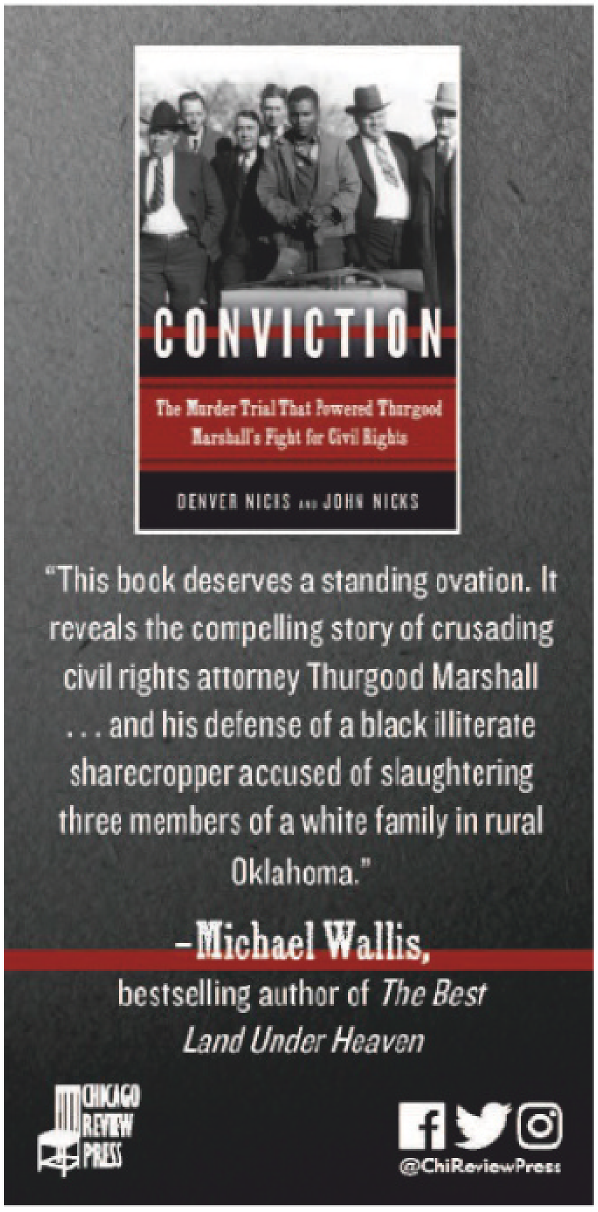

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EMMA WATSON, SAOIRSE RONAN, ELIZA SCANLEN, AND FLORENCE PUGH IN *LITTLE WOMEN* (WILSON WEBB)

IN OUR TIME

The perennial magic of *Little Women*

by ERIN SCHWARTZ

A 1927 poll of high school students found that *Little Women* was the book they considered the most influential, ahead of the Bible, which came in second. This was 10 years after the first silent film adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's novel and nine years after the second. The first major studio production of *Little Women* premiered in 1933, when set designers could still order the wallpaper patterns found in Orchard House, the family home where Alcott wrote her novel, directly from their manufacturers. In its review, *The New York Times* described Katharine Hepburn's portrayal of heroine Jo March as being "as vital, sympathetic and full of the joie de vivre as one could hope for" and enthused, "Imagine a picture concerned merely with the doings of a healthy-minded family!"

In 1949, MGM remade *Little Women* in Technicolor, featuring Elizabeth Taylor as a weapons-grade selfish Amy, her styling as the youngest March daughter complete with swaths of eyeliner. Less than a quarter of a century later, a tepidly received BBC miniseries was criticized along women's movement lines for equating marriage with self-actualization. Then came Gillian Armstrong's 1994 remake, starring Winona Ryder, Susan Sarandon, and a baby-faced Christian Bale, the first film adaptation written and directed by women. The legend of the '90s remake comes with an Alcottesque origin story of writer Robin Swicord and producer Amy Pascal spending 12 years pitching the film to male executives who didn't believe a movie with five female leads could be a box office success.

With seven film adaptations, at least 10 television adaptations (including two animes), several plays, and one opera, *Little Women* is one of the most adapted works of American literature, something I was surprised to learn after watching Greta Gerwig's latest version. News of her film's release was met with enthusiasm and a decent amount of surprise: the gleeful clamoring over an early gift, but surprise nonetheless. Perhaps *Little Women* adaptations follow something like the 30-year trend cycle; it's not only *Little Women* that summons nostalgia but specifically the *Little Women* of one's childhood.

To explain this, I need to cite my elder sister, Anne. A couple of years ago, she said how much it delighted her that the 1994 *Little Women* is so unapologetically a document of '90s third-wave feminism, with March matriarch Marmee's diatribes about the negative health effects of corsets and her lectures on the benefits of education.

Erin Schwartz is the managing editor of Study Hall. *She writes frequently for* The Nation *on television, popular culture, and books.*

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Of course, these themes aren't fabricated; all of them are present in the original *Little Women*, but the wonderful thing about adapting a 536-page novel is that Swicord could pick and choose lines that could have also appeared in a Bikini Kill song.

Although a reviewer of the 1918 film worried that fans of the book would find the movie "a sort of sacrilege," the magic of *Little Women* adaptations does not come from their faithfulness to the source material alone. The wallpaper might be right, but the tone of each film is openly, gloriously anachronistic. They are pictures of their own time cast through the prism of Alcott's novel. For example, in 1933, the Marches' frugality has a nationalistic bent, and in 1949, four years after V-E Day, their neighbor and surrogate brother, Laurie, is conspicuously not Italian. Gerwig's adaptation therefore faces two challenges: to be a good film and—a more delicate calculation—to mark how we can imagine women (as sisters, as antagonists, as wives, as workers) in our own time.

Unlike previous adaptations, Gerwig's film begins in medias res: Grown-up Jo (Saoirse Ronan) is struggling to become a writer in New York City and returns home to Concord, Massachusetts, when she learns that her sister Beth (Eliza Scanlen) is seriously ill. The familiar scenes—balls, plays, Christmas breakfasts given away, disastrous haircuts—appear mostly in the memories that Jo recalls in between fitful bouts of sleep on her train ride north. The new structure naturalizes the jumbled, episodic quality of the story as the product of a protagonist hurrying home; it also helpfully introduces Professor Bhaer—whom Jo will marry—much sooner. Gerwig has chosen to depart from the novel by casting Louis Garrel, who is young and sexy, as the professor; in the book, Alcott tells us, somewhat cruelly, that the character "was neither rich nor great, young nor handsome, in no respect what is called fascinating, imposing, or brilliant."

One consequence of the fact that each *Little Women* film marks the gender attitudes of its time is that certain characters get more or less favorable treatment depending on the era. It was very easy to dunk on poor, materialistic Amy during the Great Depression. Marmee (Laura Dern in the most recent version) is always wise and observant, but Gerwig restores a scene from the novel left out of earlier adaptations, in which she expresses a quiet rage familiar to contemporary feminists: "I'm angry nearly every day of my life," she tells Jo, "but I have learned not to show it." Beth tends to be sidelined from the time her sisters leave home until her death, but Gerwig uses Beth's struggle with illness to frame the film, making her newly central to its narrative.

She is a tricky character to get right. Alcott writes that "there are many Beths in the world, shy and quiet, sitting in corners till needed, and living for others so cheerfully that no one sees the sacrifices till the little cricket on the hearth stops chirping." She is frequently described as sick, simple, and good and thus appears in adaptations as a naïf or a particularly bland saint. But this doesn't do justice to the strength of her feelings, the brisk independence with which she makes decisions, and the depth of her understanding of disability and her own mortality. In a scene in the new film set on a gray New England beach, Beth gently rebukes Jo for refusing to face the possibility that she will die, which marks the point at which Jo begins to appreciate that the inner worlds of her sisters are as rich as her own.

Gerwig also treats Amy (Florence Pugh) more generously. Her obsessions with upper-class manners, luxury goods, and acquiring a perfect nose aren't caricatured or portrayed as a foil to Jo's nonconformity but are presented, in part, as an economic decision. At one point, Aunt March (Meryl Streep) exhorts a young Amy, "Marry well. Save your family." Amy, mute but calculating, listens. When Laurie, played by Timothée Chalamet, goes to her painting studio in Paris years later to flirt with her by criticizing her plan to marry the wealthy Fred Vaughn, she's brisk, almost rude, instead of kittenish in her rebuttal. She rattles off suffragist talking points about property and child custody laws and tells him, "Don't sit there and tell me about that marriage isn't an economic proposition, because it is."

Of course, Alcott's Amy would have never been so direct. But that's the point of a *Little Women* adaptation in our moment: Bhaer and Amy and Jo and Beth satisfy a contemporary hunger for hot, empathetic, and vaguely anti-capitalist heroes and heroines. For example, Gerwig devotes a luxurious span of the film's 135-minute running time to the contract negotiations between Jo and her publisher. (The publisher urges her to sign away the copyright for $500; Jo refuses and argues up her share of royalties.)

The economic challenges women face

are a theme in every *Little Women* adaptation, but they're seldom rendered in such detail. Here, they can be dealt with through confrontation with the boss or by making a clear-eyed decision to monetize one's femininity.

In a closing scene, for example, Jo debates with her publisher over whether her protagonist has to get married. At first, she's obstinate: The girl in her book will stay single. The publisher insists that a marriage is the ending readers want. She relents. The film cuts to Jo's romantic reunion in the rain with Bhaer, and we learn that, despite Jo's reluctance, this story ends with a marriage after all.

In her own life, Alcott never married. "I am more than half-persuaded that I am a man's soul, put by some freak of nature into a woman's body," she told Louise Chandler Moulton, a contemporary poet and critic who interviewed her for a biographical profile published in 1884. Moulton wrote that when she asked why, Alcott's blue-gray eyes "sparkled with laughter." She replied, "Well, for one thing, because I have fallen in love in my life with so many pretty girls, and never once the least little bit with any man."

In *Little Women*, Jo wishes she had been born a boy frequently enough to make it her motto. My hope for the next adaptation is that the screenwriter and the director might take her at her word, might understand Jo's wish not only as a response to the political status of women in the 19th century but also as an expression of a deeper, more personal longing. It might elucidate certain ambiguities in the story. The scene in which Jo rejects Laurie's proposal has always felt, to me, like a rupture in the novel. Laurie asks Jo why she doesn't love him, and she can't explain; there is something she cannot articulate. "I don't know why I can't love you as you want me to," she tells him. "I've tried, but I can't change the feeling, and it would be a lie to say I do when I don't."

In the 1933 film, the line is virtually unchanged. "I don't know why I can't love you the way you want me to," Hepburn's Jo says. "I've tried, but I can't change the feeling, and it would be a lie to say I do if I don't." In the 1949 version, Jo tells Laurie that she "can't say I love you when I don't" and that "I don't think I'll ever marry." Ryder's Jo tells Laurie, "You're my dearest friend. I *just can't* go be a wife." Ronan's Jo says, "I can't. I can't," her voice rising.

Jo and Laurie have a close and loving relationship. They fight constantly, but they understand each other in a milieu determined to misunderstand them both. Jo chooses older, unsexy, not "fascinating, imposing, or brilliant" Bhaer over her closest friend. But Alcott said that she was "never once the least little bit" in love with a man, and this, perhaps, extends to her characters. In this light, Bhaer may have been conceived less as a character than as a literary device to sell books, like the neat marriage-plot ending that Jo's publisher asks for in the conclusion of Gerwig's film.

Unlike Bhaer, Laurie has real-life analogues. The character was inspired by Ladislas Wisniewski, a Polish musician whom Alcott met in Europe, and her friend Alf Whitman. Knowing this, one wonders if Jo's rejection of Laurie is an act of kindness, even mercy. Jo can't reciprocate her friend's romantic love, so she offers a blunt, opaque rejection—"I've tried, but I can't change the feeling"—rather than fit him into a story line in which he doesn't belong. *Little Women* was commissioned as a book for girls, and it made Alcott rich; she was as aware as anyone what her characters could or could not say. The power of adaptation is to fill in the subtext. ■

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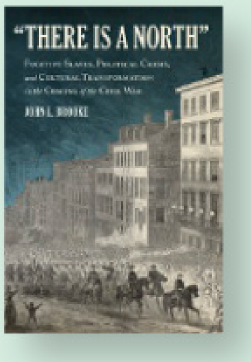

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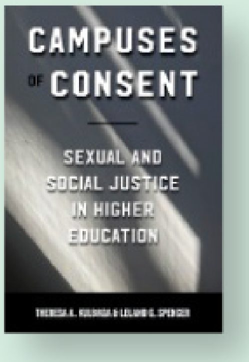

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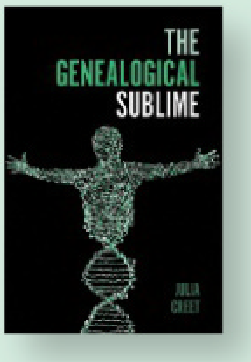

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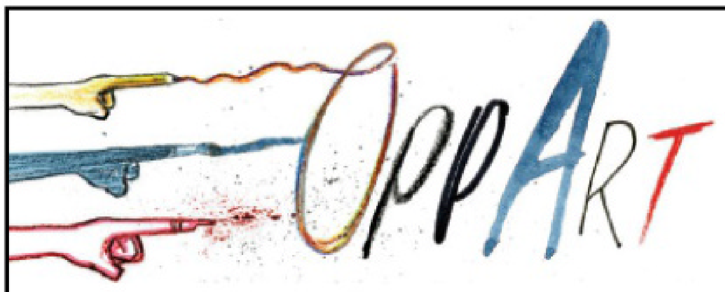

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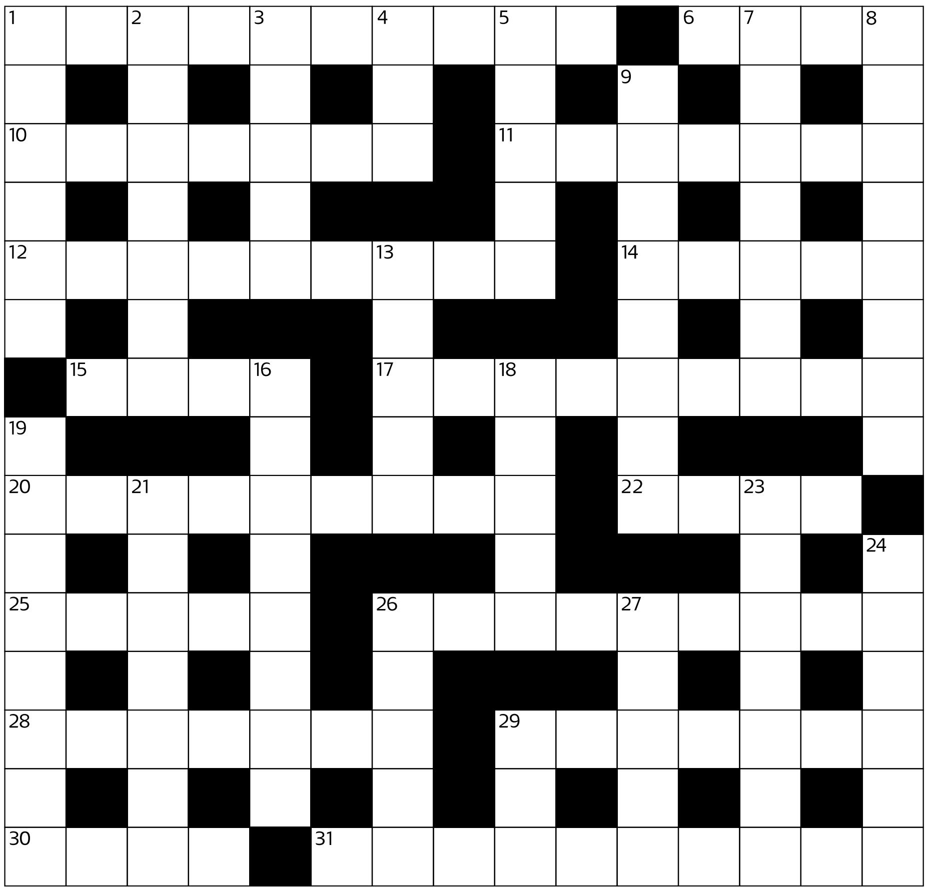
Puzzle No. 3520

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

1 Coordinate pretty nice permutation (1-9)

6 Crow in second-rate newspaper (4)

10 Mythical creature's simple garment, worn without the front bits (7)

11 One way to solve problems with blend of ale and 6 (7)

12 Hang around with mother, taking in Oklahoma's first landmark of civil engineering (6,3)

14 Outspoken division of business cruises (5)

15 Went back into the sea (4)

17 Sweden confused Doris for 24 hours (9)

20 In blunder, we arranged bra and panties (9)

22 Similar to a word whose noun usage has taken off thanks to social media (4)

25 Lift out of order at entrance to hotel—it's disgusting (5)

26 Lee faces a choice of initial letters for radio stations at religious site (6,3)

28 Consider once again what may happen when playing tag with a member of the clergy (7)

29 Candy (i.e., disguised poison) (7)

30 Mammal's fur in the ear (4)

31 Hospital employee and boxer getting into fight with one whose questions are heard, more or less, in five Across entries (10)

DOWN

1 Teens brought up timid cover for being open about their sexuality (6)

2 Harmful racket has upset Missouri (7)

3 Lyric poem backing drug (ecstasy) (5)

4 and **29** Agree with incarcerated dog? (6)

5 Song shattered lamps (5)

7 Professional association ousting general after Southern soldier is set up anew (7)

8 Prosthesis (false leg) conceals revised essay (5,3)

9 Yellowish white, for example, on the outskirts of gaseous inferno (8)

13 Napalm manufacturer's beginning to engage in search for water (5)

16 Buy tea, mostly in a bag (8)

18 Deity, rising to snatch deity's headgear (2-3)

19 Produce Barnum, stealing third part of quarter (3,5)

21 Rescue slandered running back (7)

23 European country raised hold on one Arab (7)

24 Motionless, prepare treats (2,4)

26 Unfairly roast ballplayer (5)

27 Love elevated a bad actor in Midwestern city (5)

29 See 4

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3519

ACROSS **1** anag. **5** AUT(UM)N (*tuna* anag.) **8** S(H)EAR **9** RED R, ESSES **11** anag. **12** hidden **13** IN TIM I DATE **16** initial letters **18** rev. **19** ERGO + NO MICS **21** anag. **23** I(SLAM)I + C **25** NORT (rev.) + H(P)OLE **26** S(U)NNI (rev.) **27** 2 defs. **28** STEP-SIN

DOWN **1** RESU (rev.) + S + CITATION **2** hidden **3** anag. **4** SERE + NADER **5** AD + DUP[e] **6** [f/T]-RENCH **7** MU(SSOL + I)NI (*I* + *loss* rev.) **10** letter bank **14** TH(UNDER)E + R **15** T + WO + TIMERS (anag.) **17** COAL + ESC + E **20** BOTH-ER **22** S(W)OON **24** 2 defs.

R	E	C	I	P	E	S		A	U	T	U	M	N	
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Words Matter

> **S**hortly after I came from Europe to the US, a close friend gifted me a subscription to *The Nation*. I've been a faithful reader and, when I was able to, supporter of the magazine. **We need *The Nation* now more than ever; its voice needs to be heard.** I like to think I'll help keep it up for the future. It still reminds me of my old friend.
>
> —Claudia Sole, Calif.

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Forests are Threatened

Deforestation is the third largest source of the **carbon emissions** driving climate change, after coal and oil. An estimated 15% of all greenhouse gas emissions result from deforestation.[1]

Every minute, an area of forest equivalent to **27 soccer fields** is lost, with a total loss of 18.7 million acres annually.[2]

The Amazon, the planet's largest rainforest, has lost at least 17% of its forest cover in the last half century through clearing, mainly for **cattle grazing and vast soybean farms.**[3]

In Indonesia, another biodiversity hotspot home to orangutans, rhinos, and tigers, key islands have lost 85% of their forest due to conversion to **palm oil plantations**.[4]

Loss of forests' cooling and water cycling services is also causing warming and drying both in the local area of deforestation and globally. For example, deforestation in the Amazon is predicted to **decrease rainfall** in the US Midwest, Northwest, and parts of the South during the agricultural season.[5]

Forest loss may be near a planetary boundary or **tipping point**. After passing the tipping point threshold, forests loss may be irreversible and move Earth's climate to a "hothouse state" due to loss of carbon sequestration and climate regulation.[6]

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